MORNINGS WITH MASTERS OF ART

H. H. POWERS

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MORNINGS WITH MASTERS OF ART

C 11, Madonna with St. Anne (Cartoon). Burlington House, London.
Leonardo da Vinci, 1452–1519.

MORNINGS

WITH

MASTERS OF ART

BY

H. H. POWERS, PH.D.

PRESIDENT BUREAU OF UNIVERSITY TRAVEL

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INTRODUCTION

THE purpose of this book is somewhat more ambitious than its title suggests. It is an attempt partially to interpret the development of Christian art from the time of Constantine to the death of Michelangelo. The term, Christian, as applied to art, may be used in two senses. On the one hand, it may mean the art of countries and periods which have recognized, in a degree at least, the Christian religion. In that sense, all the art of Europe for the last sixteen hundred years, with the single exception of the Moorish art in Spain, must be accounted Christian. There is a feeble semblance of unity, and possibly of Christian suggestion, in this vast category, but there are few adjectives less descriptive of the art of Boucher or Whistler than this term, Christian. The word will be more serviceable, therefore, if used in a more limited sense. From the fourth century to the sixteenth, art was developed primarily in the service of the Christian religion. Not only were the subjects treated for the most part related to its history and practices, but in their expression we can easily trace habits of thought and ideals which were derived wholly or in part from this faith. During the latter part of this period, other influences were plainly at work, and that increasingly. The revival of interest in the ancient culture was the most conspicuous and conscious of these influences, but not the most potent. The study of nature and a broadening conception of life and its environment slowly gave rise to ideals which, while not subversive of Christian faith or

principles, are not distinctive of it. Art first slips the leash of church patronage and direct control, and finally of church themes and habits of thought. Art does not become anti-Christian or irreligious. It merely busies itself with another order of ideas. This change was essentially effected by the middle of the sixteenth century, and the great art of the northern countries, which developed after that time, while frequently dealing with Christian themes and full of reminiscences of the Christian art of an earlier day, is not in any very significant sense Christian. Few painters have been better suited by temperament for the interpretation of Christianity than Rembrandt, and some of his religious pictures, like the incomparable Supper at Emmaus in the Louvre, seem pre-eminently to deserve that title. But such themes are the exception, and a picture like the Night Watch, which represents a military company in the most secular of employments, involves precisely the same resources and works the same spell. The distinctively religious element is not dominant in Rembrandt's art, or in the art of the North generally. The same is conspicuously true of Rembrandt's great contemporary, Velasquez, and even Murillo is only an apparent exception. The plain fact is that in the northern art, and even in the southern art after Michelangelo, distinctively Christian ideals can be traced only as historic survivals. For this reason it has seemed best to confine this study to the period mentioned.

For a different reason, it has seemed best for the time being to omit all consideration of Venetian art. This art is quite as distinctively Christian as the Florentine, perhaps more so, but as Christian art it tells us little that is new. The Christian ideals were present to the minds of the Venetians in much the same form as to the Florentines, though they grasped them with less subtlety. The Venetian art differed in other respects enormously from the art which we are here considering. Were we interested for the moment in tracing

some other order of ideas, the Venetian art might easily be of paramount importance. But aside from the technique of painting, in which the Venetians achieved an enviable distinction, the art of Venice differs from that of Italy proper chiefly in two particulars. The first is its Orientalism. We shall never understand Venice until we think of her as culturally a suburb of Constantinople, whose influence on the art of Europe, always considerable, was here supreme. It was no slavish copying of Byzantine models, — Venice was quite too independent for that, — but a temperamental sympathy with Oriental feeling in art matters. This, in its place, is a most interesting subject for study.

Aside from this Orientalism, Venice is essentially modern. Her treatment of religious themes is sincere enough, but conventional. In her art we find neither the lively zeal of Giotto nor the rapturous ecstasy of Fra Angelico, nor the revolt of Fra Lippo, nor the deeper spiritual insight of Leonardo or Michelangelo. Her religious art is both serious and sincere, but with few exceptions it has neither intensity nor spiritual subtlety. Even the stupendous dramatic works of Titian are spectacular rather than expressive of soul yearning. Titian merely exploits the stage possibilities of the conventional faith. But these great mundanes are as keenly alive to the things that interest modern art as the Florentines were to their own ideals. Giorgione loved landscape as well as Corot, if he did not, in his short life, carry it so far. Titian rivals Sargent in his appreciation of the delight of the eye and the beauty of the flesh. This is not disparagement; the theme of these painters was neither unworthy nor materialistic. They were on the road to discover spiritual possibilities in impersonal nature which rival those of Michelangelo's prophets. But with all their developed technique they stand at the beginning of one epoch as their great Florentine contemporaries stand at the end of another. All honor to them in their place, but this is not their place.

Our field thus defined, it remains for us to conceive clearly what we propose to do in it. The interpretation of art must be carefully distinguished from the interpretation or explanation of painting, sculpture, and so forth, the special forms of art. The latter would imply much discussion of processes, mediums, materials, and so forth. To some extent these inquiries are inevitable, for it not infrequently happens that the materials or the processes employed in art have much to do with the choice of themes and the manner of their treatment. This is conspicuously true of the mosaics, where the building of pictures with little cubes of marble or other material was so unlike painting, making some things so much easier and other things so much harder, that the ideals of art inevitably underwent serious modification in consequence. We shall not understand the mosaics or get into sympathy with them, unless we see that their disparagement of personality and intellectual suggestion and their emphasis upon splendor and interpretive decoration was largely due to the materials of which they were made and the process which the artist was compelled to employ. It is folly to attempt to make a picture with mosaic or a statue with paint. When we see art developing preferences in subject and manner on account of the materials or the processes in use, we can understand that development only by taking account of these processes and materials. So much we shall try to do, and *only* so much, and this too in an utterly untechnical manner. Into the maze of studio jargon and studio procedure we shall not try to penetrate. Not only is this a process of enormous difficulty for the layman, it is distinctly prejudicial to his enjoyment of art. The studio bears the same relation to art that the kitchen does to the banquet. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, not in the cooking. It is not through the kitchen that the guests are taken to the feast.

To interpret art we must trace the development of its ideals. Shaped by many forces, by the social order, by

contact with other peoples, by natural environment, and by fear of the gods, ideals change as these things change. The outward forms of art are but reflections of the ideals of a given time and place. We take up the art of a period or a people that is past as we open a manuscript which records in a half forgotten tongue things great and worthy to be known. Whether it be on papyrus or parchment and written with a stylus or a pen, need concern us only if it help us to decipher something ambiguous or obscure. The great question must ever be, what does it tell us? In what way can it enlarge the thoughts of the living by its message from the dead?

None can realize better than the writer the inadequacy of his work. Years of closest intimacy with the art he is endeavoring to interpret have been years of enforced isolation from the interpretive thoughts of other workers. Many a thing here hinted has elsewhere been fully revealed; many an error here committed has long since found correction, probably in works accessible to many readers. Above all, the vista here opened stretches visibly beyond where his thought can lead. So be it. He has waited long for the leisure to amplify his thought by reading and check his conclusions with those of other men. It is not to be. If the inspiration which prompts these pages is to be in any measure conveyed to the reader, it must be by the freshness born of this first hand contact and not by exhaustiveness of collateral research.

To this habit of first hand contact must be attributed two characteristics of the book which may seem peculiar. The first is the writer's constant mental assumption that we are making our way to the church or gallery in question and standing in the visible presence of that which we are studying. This mental assumption is in part inevitable and in part deliberate. Twenty years of work with classes in the presence of these works themselves has fixed indelibly upon his imagina-

tion, not only the picture or statue, but the building, the windows, and the light, the seats upon which we sit, even the garbed sacristan with his keys or the smart uniformed custodian whose perfunctory attendance has in these later years been slowly humanized by the smile of friendly recognition. To conjure away these accessories which have slowly woven themselves into one great fabric of the imagination would be neither possible nor congenial. The radiance which lives about these immortal works, has touched with its own glory these accidents of time and place. But that which has thus become a necessity is also choice. In the realm of books, with their shadowy symbols and their ghosts of persons and things, all meanings are minimized by this loss of the sense of reality. To the reader, the name, Italy, comes to suggest a brown leather binding on the third library shelf, or a boot-shaped patch of yellow on an atlas page. To such a background of the concrete it is impossible to attach the realities of Italy. If, therefore, the reader of this book can be made to forget his book, and to picture to himself ever so feebly a walk through a Florentine street, a quiet corner between chapel walls, and a thing of color and shape before him, he will have begun to acquire that sense of reality which can alone give value to other impressions.

The second and more serious fact which this habit must explain is the absolute dependence of the text upon illustrations. In discussing a picture, no attempt has been made to describe it, that is, to construct it in imagination. Suppose a lecturer should begin his discussion of the Sistine Madonna by drawing it upon the blackboard. Absurdly inadequate, you say, yet far more adequate than any word picture, even the most skillful. At every step in these discussions the picture or statue is referred to as though we were in its presence. It is useless to talk about art unless, in some measure, we have the art to talk about. This book contains reproductions of 125 of the most important subjects for

study; obviously all the available illustrative material could not be included within the limits of this volume.[1] The reader cannot be too strongly urged to seek his impressions of art from art itself, using word suggestion only as a supplement, never as a substitute. Our age, for peculiar reasons, labors under the impression that words are the only real and final medium for the expression of ideas, whereas they are neither the only nor the best medium for ideas of a certain kind, and for certain ideas of the highest value they are wholly unavailable. Form and feature were eloquent before speech was born and will be when speech is forgotten. Not a little time can profitably be spent in verifying the suggestions of the text, the whole being reinforced by a pictorial review when each chapter is finished. If the reader, accustomed to the effortless perusal of modern fiction, chafes under this retardation of his pace, the writer can only express his sympathy, reminding him the while that the difficulties thus incurred are not of his choosing but inhere rather in the subject. Every resource at his disposal has been drawn upon to reduce the labor which these studies involve. He has striven to give in an hour so much as may be given of that which he has acquired in a year. But the path up Parnassus was ever toilsome, and the pilgrim who would make it wholly easy will find his shrine at the foot.

[1] Among the various series of penny prints, "The University Prints" is sufficiently comprehensive to furnish all the material required. Series especially prepared for the readers of this book are available at moderate cost. One series is a duplicate of the 125 subjects reproduced in this book by arrangement with the University Print publishers. A second supplemental series of 125 arranged by chapters is listed at the back of the book. In using collections of separate prints it is advantageous for the reader to begin each chapter by selecting the necessary illustrations, and arranging them in the proper order so that reference to them is easy. It is better to have them spread out rather than piled one above the other, as comparison is often highly important. So far as possible, too, the necessity for handling them should be avoided, as this makes reading laborious and too often discourages the attempt. The prints can be arranged on a desk or table. Some will resort to the more difficult but admirable method of fastening them to an upright board or even to a door where the light is good and the reader can sit at close range.

CHAPTER I

THE AFTERGLOW OF GREECE

NAPLES is not associated in the mind of the traveler with art. Her attractions are her picturesque squalor and the far famed natural beauty of her surroundings. Yet if we care for "the things that are more excellent," we are here upon holy ground, for Naples was an outpost of that civilization which the world still reveres as the highest, and her great Museum is a reliquary with which few others can compare. The very name, Naples, Nea-polis, New City, is Greek, for here, on the site of what is now known as Old Naples, the Greeks built the newest of that beautiful chain of cities which, beginning with Cumæ on the headlands at the northwest corner of the bay, stretched on through Parthenope, where the hotels of Naples now stand, through Herculaneum and Pompeii and Nuceria and Pæstum, on indefinitely to the toe and round the heel of the boot, not forgetting Sicily, which they wrested almost entire from Phœnician Carthage. And here accident and calamity have preserved to us things that elsewhere have been destroyed in the art of the Greeks. It is not the art of Athens, for we are out on the frontier of Hellas, where the stream from the central spring ran turbid with many a foreign admixture, but it is not the less significant. We see as through a glass, darkly, but the thing we see is Greek.

As we enter the great Museum, we will pay no attention for the moment to the Greek bronzes, most precious in the world, nor to the marbles, — not because they do not deserve attention, but because they deserve more attention than we can

now give. He who would enter into the spirit of that ineffable art must not cumber himself with lesser cares.

Mounting the great stairway of the Museum to the first entrance on the right, we enter a series of low rooms whose walls are covered with frescoes taken from the houses of Pompeii. Most are cheap and poor, but a few are admirable, like Achilles and Briseis, the Centaur teaching Achilles to play the lyre, the despairing Medea, and so forth, copies, all of them, of Greek masterpieces whose character we can partly guess from these humble reproductions. But our attention is chiefly attracted to a tripod at the end of the first room, upon whose revolving sides are mounted the only real Greek paintings the world possesses. A few thin slabs of marble such as the Greeks used for this purpose, and the Greeks only, and which must therefore have been imported from Greece itself, bear the faded remains of the greatest of Greek arts. For there can be no doubt that the word, art, suggested to the Greek mind, as to our own, primarily painting. Socrates was by profession a sculptor, and penitent Athens, long after his death, preserved religiously a humble work of his in the Propylea, on the Acropolis itself, yet when he discusses the principles of art with his disciples, he draws all his illustrations from painting. The professional bias would certainly have inclined the other way, but his hearers were more familiar with painting, and, true teacher that he was, he adapts himself to their needs. Greek painting has perished, and Greek bronzes have been melted up, and so we are left to draw our inferences almost wholly from Greek marble sculpture, but we must not forget that this was the less important form of the less important art as the Greeks regarded it. Further, it was not Greek sculpture which gave birth to Christian art, but Greek painting. We must therefore husband with jealous care such slender data as we possess for the study of this noble art.

The little paintings upon the tripod are not representative.

One (B 3) represents a graceful group of girls, two of them playing jack-stones or knuckle-bones, which they toss in the air and catch upon the back of their pretty hands. Others stand, doing nothing in particular, but so disposing themselves that their beautiful arms form charming braided patterns across the scene. Classic profiles, artistic coiffures, and lovely draperies complete the dainty whole. It is art in lighter vein, as are all the others, even the splendid chariot and charioteer which can hardly have had a serious meaning. There is no deep sentiment or soul-stirring incident. It is a thing flung off by a facile hand, a suggestion of the wealth with which Greek art inundated even the little shallows of ancient life. Yet the very triviality of these things has its significance, for they are infinitely perfect in some of the great elements of art. The drawing is such as will bring a thrill to the veriest novice, so amazingly delicate are the lines, the postures and the groupings of these nameless personalities. If the bric-a-brac makers of Greece could give us such things as these, what must have been the works of Parrhasius and Apelles?

Some of the better achievements of Greek art are suggested, however imperfectly, in the Pompeiian wall paintings above referred to. For the most part, these are copies of Greek masterpieces. All are degraded by the copyist's touch, some hopelessly so, and that increasingly as we come to works of a later period. For this is the great lesson which we have to learn as we wander through Italy on our quest, that despite her splendid achievements of a later time, she failed to understand the wonderful art whose later direction was entrusted to her, and so degraded and debauched it increasingly as she slowly gave freer scope to her own instincts.

But some of these paintings, which reflect a Greek style rather than copy a Greek masterpiece, are especially worthy of attention. They are panels on which are represented in sketchiest possible manner, in delicate tones, charged heavily with atmosphere, an idyllic landscape, with a figure or two

B 3, Maidens Playing with Jackstones. National Museum, Naples. Painting on Marble from Herculaneum.

wandering not too conspicuously nor yet too meaningfully down the dreamy perspective. These Greek imaginings have suffered sadly from the rude contact of Vesuvian ashes, and still more from the heavy incubus of Roman patronage, but they are strongly suggestive of some of the latest achievements in art. These pale glimpses of the Elysian Fields remind us not a little of the work of the inspired Frenchman through whose hallowed dreamland we follow in quest of Sainte Geneviève. Our apologies to him for suggesting too close an analogy between his creations and these humble and disfigured things, but if our imagination is able to find its way through their disfigurement to the glorious masterpieces which suggested them, then our apologies are due to the Greek.

But the great Museum has a still further revelation for us in one of the halls below. Here, surrounded by statues, is a large mosaic, the so-called "Battle of Issus" (B 14), in which it is easy to recognize one of the masterpieces of Greek painting. It is partially destroyed, but the supreme figures of the composition, Alexander and Darius, are plainly discernible, and the action and sentiment unmistakable. Perhaps this is as near as we shall ever come to one of the great Greek masters of painting, a master of the first rank and of the golden days of Alexander himself or his early successors. It is therefore worth our while to give it our careful attention.

The subject is obviously one of Alexander's battles. The conqueror is rushing into the thickest of the fight, himself the most redoubtable of this redoubtable host. The fate of the day is decided, the Persians are in retreat, and the charioteer of the vanquished Darius, in an agony of fear, is lashing his horses for flight. Looking closer we see that the spear of Alexander has thrust through one of Darius' bodyguard, one of his paladins, and in helpless sympathy, the monarch, whose very life is at stake, reaches out an impotent arm to help his fallen companion. Something of

B 14, Battle of Issus. National Museum, Naples. Floor Mosaic, from House of the Faun, Pompeii.

poetic license, no doubt, in this condensing of the long line of battle which brings the two monarchs within a spear's length of each other, but marvelous fidelity to the spirit of the onset and the rout, as also to the character of the two chief personalities. The humanity of the unfortunate monarch is as well attested as the headlong bravado of the conqueror.

But our admiration for these things easily blinds us to the extraordinary difficulties which such a theme involves and the genius with which these difficulties have been overcome. It will not do to have pictures rush headlong away from one end of their imprisoned space to pile up unrestrained at the other. Pictures must contain themselves, willingly, as it were, within their appropriate limits. They must find their interest in the center, or, more exactly, in the upper center, toward which all must seem to gravitate. But how shall we make this charge and rout, which sweeps past like a cyclone, gravitate toward the center? Our artist is equal to the difficult task.

The problem is essentially one of directing the observer's attention. The picture must not run away with itself. The rush from the left must be counterbalanced by suggestions from the right. These suggestions, however varied, all reduce, in painting, to two, which we may call eye-paths and mental suggestion.

The eye, like the feet, travels easily and willingly where there are paths, and unwillingly or not at all across lots. A picture that has convenient eye-paths is easily seen and remembered; one that lacks such paths is hard to see and soon forgotten. In extreme cases the eye will simply balk, and refuse to do its work altogether. Eye-paths are in general, lines of light or of strong, stimulating color. Often they are successive masses of such light or color arranged stepping-stone fashion, disconnected but easy to follow. Even dark lines, clearly defined against a light neutral ground, catch and guide the eye.

Mental suggestion is rather a push or impulse given to the mind, sending attention in a certain direction. If we see a crowd of people looking in a certain direction, we look in the same direction to see what they are looking at. Gesture, movement, or leaning of the body, anything that indicates that the person's thought or feeling is moving in a certain direction, will send ours in the same direction.

Let us notice the devices by which the artist has checked the movement of retreat and set up counter movement toward the center to offset the movement of the charge.

First, the Persians are in retreat and their spears, carried over their shoulders, form eye-paths leading us toward the upper center. More suggestive still, the horses, lashed to flight, seem to balk in terror. This not only heightens the terrible strain of the situation, but the horses' legs again lead the eye in the desired direction. Above all, the leaning figure of Darius gives the same backward movement.

But here we come to our second factor, mental suggestion. Let us imagine that Darius, instead of turning and reaching out to his companion, were facing forward and merely tipped backward, perhaps by the sudden start of the chariot. The line of the body would have been the same as now, leading the eye in the desired direction, but the mental suggestion would have been quite the reverse. His *thought* would have reached forward and would have carried our thought with it. As it is, mind and sense alike conspire to arrest the dangerous rush of the picture and direct us aright.

By the use of these subtle means we have in a highly developed form what the artists call a composition, an arrangement studied with reference alike to requirements of action and life, and the limitations of pictorial representation. But there is still another thing to note which artists themselves too often forget, but which our artist certainly remembered. When we have gotten lines, masses and mental suggestion all properly arranged, and composition faultless,

our picture may still be poor art, because we have used trivial or improbable motives to secure the necessary arrangement and action. Darius must lean backward, must, if possible, *think* backward, but suppose he leaned back to scream in terror or beg for mercy. The picture would be composed as now, would perhaps be as true to nature as now, but it would be cheap art. Worse still, if, as often happens, the position suggests a trivial motive, or no motive at all. The composition, no matter how perfect, then ceases to be art altogether. No, the composition must unfold naturally, actuated by great impulses that have dignity and beauty of their own.

Note how magnificently our artist has met this requirement. Here is the ruler of a vast empire who has lost everything, and whose life itself is in instant danger, and yet at this supreme moment, he forgets himself and his peril, and his very soul goes out in an agony of impotent sympathy at the sight of the death of his faithful companion. Humanity knows no loftier sentiment than self-forgetting devotion, than love which recks not of danger and hopes not for reward. Our artist has given us a great composition motived by a great sentiment. This is art. This picture is the equal of the greatest masterpieces of Christian art. As a masterpiece, both of composition and technical skill, and as an expression of the noblest sentiments, the Battle of Issus and the Sistine Madonna may claim an equal place in our regard.

But let us hasten to add that the picture as we now find it, is far from being entitled to unqualified praise. We must look through a thick and obscuring veil if we are to find the master we are seeking, for a Roman had the inconceivable taste to have this picture copied in mosaic for his dining-room floor. Who would decorate his dining-room floor with a copy of the Sistine Madonna? It would be quite as appropriate.

We all feel that such a use of the picture is wrong, but why? It will pay us to analyze our feelings.

In the first place, we do not want to walk on Darius and Alexander, or on commoner folk, or upon horses or living things of any sort. Even realistic roses and the like will slightly deter the sensitive footstep. This may seem to be an over delicate sensitiveness, but it is precisely in this domain of the subtler sentiments that art has its home.

In the second place, even if these forms were of inanimate things, we do not want to walk over humps and holes in the floor. For it must be remembered that modeled forms seem to protrude from the background, and that perspective suggests depth, which in a floor becomes humps and holes. It is not enough to say that they are only imaginary. It is in the imagination that art lives and moves and has its being. When we can have our floor smooth only by thinking away the picture, we destroy the art which we have been at such pains to create. As a matter of fact, we never can get such a floor quite smooth. If we could measure our nervous outlay, we should find that we are twice as tired after walking a day on such a floor, as after walking on one of normal character.

It has perhaps occurred to the thoughtful reader that while our first difficulty, that of walking on men and living things, does not hold if the picture is on the side wall, the second objection does hold a little. After all, a wall suffers somewhat when in imagination, it is full of humps and holes. If the wall is wholly without importance, this objection dwindles, but if it bounds a room of real character and beauty, particularly if the wall is of special shape upon which all the beauty depends, as in the case of a dome, a vault or a tribune, we should hesitate to thus mentally mar its surface. This is a very subtle consideration, but one which, we shall see, will never quite allow itself to be ignored. The effort to preserve the integrity of the wall, its flatness and comeliness

and to keep as vivid and intact as possible the great architectural shapes which this wall helps to define, exerts a continual pressure upon pictorial art, warring against perspective and tending toward a compromise form of art with flat figures and shallow space or none. This compromise art, especially when certain other features are added which the next chapter will suggest, is appropriately known as decorative, as contrasted with pictorial.

Our study of Greek painting must include at least one more famous example, the Aldobrandini Marriage (B 13) of the Vatican Library. It is doubtless a copy, but an excellent one, and in its dignified, simple beauty and its delicate idealism it must be very near to the Greek original. With no such qualifications, therefore, as in the last case, we may take it as representative of Greek art.

The picture represents, in a long panel, and partly in literal, partly in symbolical figures, a marriage, or let us say, marriage, a theme also represented with marvellous beauty in some of the Greek marble reliefs. The long panel being difficult to compose without monotony, the artist has formed three groups which he realizes must be carefully linked in one, if it is to have the unity which is indispensable to a picture. In the center is the nuptial bed at the right of which sits the ardent bridegroom, while on the other side the goddess Aphrodite endues the abashed bride with charm. To the right is the altar of libation with priestess and bridesmaids, one of whom pours the libation, while the other, a girl of singularly modest grace, dances to the accompaniment of the lyre and song. To the left are preparations for ceremonial ablution in charge of a matron, with exquisitely toned and subdued figures of servants in the background. With this brief enumeration, let us notice the far-reaching thoughtfulness and resource of our painter.

First, these three groups must be united or we shall have three pictures instead of one, and the joint effect will be

B 13, The Aldobrandini Marriage. Fresco, Vatican, Rome. First Century, B.C.

quite lost. As we have seen, this connection can be effected in only two ways.

There must be a physical connection which tempts the eye to follow, or there must be a mental connection, an obvious reaching out of attention from one to the other. The right-hand group is composed of human beings, and as the theme centers about the most delicate of human relations, the artist does not wish to intrude the conscious observation of these people upon the privacy of the bride and groom. With fine perception, therefore, he makes this beautiful group self-contained and conscious of the bridegroom's passion. But the white robes of these lovely bridesmaids, curving gracefully outward on either side, carry the eye along fine curving lines to the foot of the bridegroom, whose gracefully relaxed leg leads the eye easily to the central picture. The group on the extreme left is even more sundered from the central group, yet must somehow connect with it. Here the artist makes use of an intermediate figure, a goddess as we know from the half nude, the conventional sign of divinity in the later Greek art. She stands plainly with the left-hand group, but she leans toward the bridal group and looks toward them, as a goddess, conceived as invisible to mortals, may appropriately do. Being with one group in body and with the other in spirit, she effectually unites the two.

But this picture is full of a subtler kind of harmony which we have not met before and which it will be long ere we meet in like measure again. The central group is broad, stable and sloping, such a group as Leonardo, nearly two thousand years later, taught the Florentines to prize. Taking its prominent outlines as a starting point, there is a marked tendency of the minor lines to become rhythmical with these, a tendency much like rhyme and meter in poetry. The sloping figure of the bride gives us a prominent line, emphasized by limb and drapery. Notice the harmonics; the right arm and right leg of the bridegroom, the figure and limb of

Aphrodite, the figure of the other goddess, the skirt of the bridesmaid. There is a like rhythm in the alternation of light and shade. Everything is as carefully weighed and disposed as is every syllable in Tennyson's poems, yet nothing seems forced or artificial. Withal, it is imbued with a sentiment that is truly nuptial, but elevated and refined. How easily the slightest ill-considered look or act could have dropped this into the very abyss.

The reader who is little accustomed to analyze composition may be restive under these suggestions. He would do well to bear in mind the close analogy of poetry. Every reader is aware that poetry consists of two things, sentiment and form. Fine sentiments do not in themselves make a poem. There must be the sensuous element of rhyme and meter, an element having no intellectual character, but profoundly influencing our feeling and so in its own way largely determining the sentiment itself. This picture is a beautiful sentiment clothed in beautiful form. Without this alternation of light and dark, this rhythm of groups and of lines, it would be a beautiful sentiment still, but it would not be a poem. It would not be art, but merely the raw material of art.

We have devoted this prolonged attention to these few examples of Greek painting, partly because of their own great excellence and the greatness of the art which they represent, and partly because these principles belong to all art and will recur continually in our later study. Scarce a single lesson can be mastered without recalling these problems of place and form, of decoration and picture, which we shall never find exemplified more beautifully or more simply than in these few faint traces of that greatest art which the disasters of our fitful civilization have as yet not quite effaced.

CHAPTER II

HOW ART BECAME CHRISTIAN

It is with varied emotions that the thoughtful traveler enters the Eternal City. There are visions of early struggles and civic virtue, of sudden empire and garish opulence, of dissoluteness fed by the loot of cities and the tribute of subject provinces. There are memories of barbarian vengeance and devasted Italy, of ruined fortunes and forgotten arts, of crumbling civilization and life again straitened within the horizon of barbarian ignorance. And then arises that other Rome of the popes, its life still fed by tribute known as Peter's Pence. And finally there is the Rome of to-day, whose ambitious modernism, masking the monuments of church and empire, has not yet won the suffrage of our hearts. What city is like unto Rome!

The art of Imperial Rome is too closely allied to that of Greece to permit of full consideration in a work from which Greek art is excluded. Roman sculpture and painting are as nearly Greek as Romans were able to make them, which is not so very near, but such significance as they have requires consideration in that connection. Rome was indebted to other peoples for some of the excellences and defects of her art, but it is significant that her art is usually spoken of as *Græco*-Roman. For the most part, it is obviously a joint product, in which all that is excellent is Greek. During the period of barbarian invasion and disaster, this Græco-Roman art perished, or degenerated into forms so primitive as to bear little resemblance to that from which they originated. When, after a long interval, sculpture and painting revived,

it was under conditions so different that Greek influence was little felt, even during the period of conscious retrospect and imitation. All that is best in Christian art is essentially a new product, born of an established faith and a fully organized society. Only after some study do we become conscious of a real connection between this new art and the great art that had perished a thousand years before.

But during this long period of disaster and prostration, there was one art that never died, the Mosaics. This art was known to the Greeks and even to the Egyptians, but it owed little to either. It is essentially a Roman art, and substantially their only creation. This may perhaps account for its vitality, for its survival under conditions which were fatal to the borrowed arts. Be that as it may, it is important to remember that the mosaics witnessed the advent of Christianity, and in their development recorded its early impulses and ideals.

Mosaic is, in essence, a design, pictorial or decorative, which is made by piecing together bits of stone or other hard material. Mosaics are generally classified as sectile or tesselated, though there are many variations and intermediate forms.

In sectile mosaic, a whole pattern or some characteristic portion of it, is cut out of a thin piece of stone carefully selected for color. Thus, in a floral design, a leaf is cut from a piece of green stone, a petal from white or colored stone, and so forth. When these are completed, they are inserted into holes of the same size and shape, cut in black or neutral stone, and the whole is then backed up with cement, and the surface polished. Such are the Florentine mosaics, so popular with tourists. Even pictorial effects with ambitious studies in perspective, are sometimes unwisely attempted. Sectile mosaic seems to have large possibilities, but it has never amounted to anything as art.

Tesselated mosaic is made up of little squares (Latin,

tesseræ, dice) set in cement. Figures and background alike are made by arranging squares of the proper color in lines and masses as required. Obviously, with squares as large as common dice, and lines of cement plainly visible, no very exact representation is possible. Yet, strangely enough, it is this form of mosaic which has risen to honor. Nor have the numerous attempts to file sharp corners and make invisible joints proved satisfactory. We persist in liking best those mosaics which do not conceal their joints or attempt too accurate representation of figures and outlines. The reason for this universal preference is an excellent subject for reflection.

A favorite compromise between these two forms of mosaic is the so-called Cosmatin work, which takes its name from the Cosmati family which worked at it for several generations. This resembles tesselated mosaic in that it is made of small pieces, geometrical in shape, but not all are squares. There are triangles, diamonds, rectangles, and even pieces of curved outline. These are used to make, not pictures or figures, but borders and rich geometrical patterns, which in turn are set into marble used for pulpits, altar screens and the like thus allying the work to sectile mosaic. Such forms serve to suggest the possible variations of the art.

The Egyptians used mosaic for jewelry, but never discovered its larger uses. The Greeks made floors of selected pebbles, making borders and even figures by arranging colors appropriately. This, however, was but the merest rudiment of the art. To the Romans we owe its development into one of the great arts of the world. They used it for floors, though walls and even ceilings in mosaic occur. Floor mosaic was necessarily made of stone, and the range of color was correspondingly limited. Of the many marbles known to the Romans, only four or five furnished colors sufficiently distinctive for mosaic use. White was, of course, the usual background, though black was occasionally employed, while

giallo antico, a dull yellow, *rosso antico*, a dull red, *verde antico*, a dark green, and porphyry, a dark purple, completed his list of colors. None of these colors were brilliant or uniform. It is plain that they sufficed for borders, geometrical patterns and the like, where colors are arbitrary, but that they were quite insufficient for pictorial effect. Yet, strangely enough, that was at first the great ambition of the Roman mosaicist. By the first century of our era, the most elaborate pictorial representations were attempted, as we have seen in the "Battle of Issus." The technique of the art is already marvellously perfect. The tesseræ are very small and closely fitted, and the selection of colors betrays an infinity of pains. But even so, the result probably bears little resemblance to the color beauty of the original.

The great expense and meager results of these pictorial reproductions probably account for the rapid evolution of mosaic ideals. Pompeii itself furnishes an example of the simpler treatment, in the well-known dog which guards the entrance to one of the finer houses. In the vestibule, which is paved with small squares of white marble, is a ferocious dog chained to a corner of the vestibule, and accompanied by the warning motto, "Cave Canem," look out for the dog. This characteristic Roman joke is represented in plain black upon a white ground. It is essentially a silhouette, but the eyes, the teeth, and a few prominent parts are outlined in white upon the flat figure of the dog. It is probable that if the owner could have afforded it, he would have had his dog represented more realistically, rounding him up into a mental hump on the floor, and perhaps surrounding him with embarrassing suggestions of depth. His choice of subject prepares us for anything. In other and even later cases precisely this is done. A good example is the representation of water fowl in the sacristy of Santa Maria in Trastevere. The work is very fine, and the artist shows a delicate appreciation of his material and resources in suggesting the rounded breasts

of his ducks by curving lines instead of by shading, for which his limited range of colors gave him little opportunity. But the rounder his birds are, the harder they are to walk on. He still cares more for good birds than for a good floor.

Ultimately, however, the artist worked out a real mosaic style and learned to prefer it without regard to cost. Bold outline figures with features, limbs and modeling set off simply by lines, are the final outcome of Roman pictorial mosaic. Still better, in many of the mosaics, picture suggestion disappears altogether, and conventional designs, fine rug patterns, take their place as appropriate floor decorations.

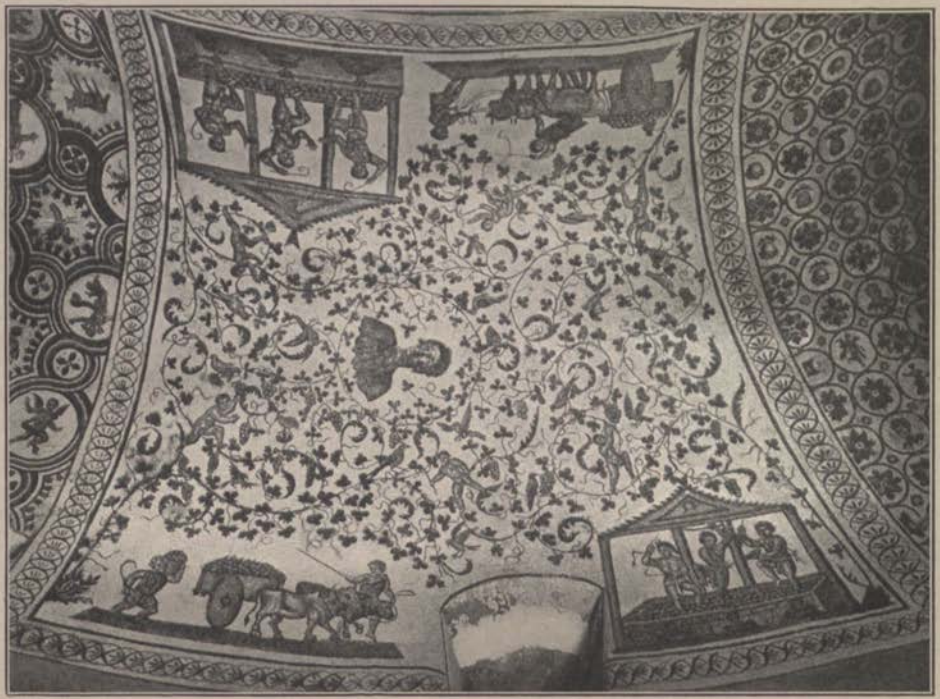
As the Roman mosaicist slowly changed from the Greek pictorial manner to a style more congenial to his art, he also slowly modified the subject in a direction congenial to Roman taste. The Roman had little place in his art for the finer human sentiments. He was fond of animals and suggestions of material indulgence. Whole halls in the Vatican sculpture gallery are filled with statues of dogs, sheep, goats and the like, superb in workmanship but totally without higher art significance. The mosaics felt the influence of this Roman taste in an exceptional degree. Animals of every sort, reptiles, fishes, fruit, even food and refuse, are the objects of the artist's skill. In the later days of the empire these subjects divided the honors with the borders and conventional patterns, apparently receiving the preference whenever means and skill permitted. A typical example is the so-called "mosaic of the unswept floor," in the Lateran Museum at Rome. The table manners of the Romans were different from our own. They reclined at meals, and fingers took the place of forks. Refuse was thrown upon the floor. If fruit was served upon the stem or meat upon the bone, stem, peel and bone were thrown upon the floor. If eggs were served from the baking dish, the empty dish was set upon the floor. If water or wine were poured from a pitcher, the pitcher was set upon the floor. And upon the floor were the familiar

household pets, not merely cats and dogs, but parrots, doves, quails, and guinea hens, all of them familiar denizens of the ordinary household. The picture is not inviting to us, but stone floors and free use of water were extenuating circumstances. To the Roman this litter of refuse and kitchen bric-a-brac doubtless came to have a homey look, suggestive of enjoyments to which he was peculiarly sensible. It is highly characteristic of Roman art that we find this litter of the dining-room carefully reproduced in the mosaic of the dining-room floor.

This art, clever, adaptable, but vulgar and materialistic, was the one living form of art which decadent Rome was able to put at the disposal of the new faith. It will therefore be of interest to trace its development in these transitional days.

Out on the Via Nomentana, perhaps a mile beyond the walls of Rome, is the little church of Santa Costanza, built to receive the tomb of Constantia, the daughter of Constantine. We may undoubtedly assign it to the period of Constantine, that is, to the first half of the fourth century. Like most of the early tomb churches, it is round, in this case consisting of a round central part resting on columns and surmounted by a dome, and an encircling aisle covered with a vault. It was probably once decorated with mosaics throughout, but only the mosaics of the vaulted aisle remain. These, the first mosaics of official Christianity (B 18), deserve the closest study.

First, it will be noticed that these mosaics are not beneath our feet but over our head. Fanciful inferences are suggested but hardly borne out by farther observation. The change of position permitted a change of materials, and the change has already been made. The vitreous gleam from the little squares shows that we are dealing with glass, not marble. This change from floor to ceiling and from marble to glass is a veritable emancipation. New and more varied



B 18, Section of Vaulted Ceiling, Memorial Church of Sta. Costanza, Rome.
Mosaic, Fourth Century.

colors, a more dazzling splendor, a more exalted theme, all seem assured. But the artist seems not to know that he is free. He has glass instead of marble, but instead of the brilliant colors thus made possible, he has painfully imitated the dull colors of his familiar marbles, dull green, dull yellow and dull purple. White is still the background.

If we study the design, we are scarcely more edified. The front sections of the vault are filled with the familiar conventional designs, unfortunately in this case most lean and commonplace. Scanty suggestions of fish, flesh or fowl seem meaningless unless we hazard the guess that the fish frequently met with is the well-known Christian symbol. On either side, one section of the vault is devoted to a vintage scene. The pictorial elements, the wine-press, the cart loaded with grapes, the figures picking the bunches, are neither beautiful nor significant. The suggestion that here is an allusion to communion wine is most unplausible. All savors of the banquet rather than of the sanctuary. Only the vine, which winds itself up into feeble decorative scrolls, is seriously worth remembering.

All these impressions are enhanced as we go farther, round to where once stood the high altar and the sarcophagus of the saint. Here is the most important part of the church; here, if anywhere, we shall find the new spirit and the symbols of the new faith. It is plain at a glance that the importance of this place was recognized and that the most accomplished artist was here employed. His workmanship is superb. More than the others, too, he has discerned the possibilities of his new material. There are touches of dazzling blue and resplendent gold unseen before. Surely here we may expect to find the new art.

Amazing to relate, we have in this most sacred place, and on a ceiling at that, the mosaic of the unswept floor. Here are drinking horns and beautiful water pitchers edged with gold; there are oranges and pomegranates and pine cones

upon the leafy branch; there are ducks and quails and parrots and guinea hens; there are cucumbers and frying pans, and basins. Superb in design and color, but strewn over the surface in disorder, they reveal as nothing else could do, the momentum of habit and ideal which no change in official faith could immediately overcome.

So far we have found no Christian art, but as we are about to leave, we notice by chance two tiny niches over the side entrances. In each we have a central figure that we hesitatingly identify as the Christ, while on either side stands another figure and a little sentinel box-like thing which we learn later to interpret as the sign of Jerusalem or Bethlehem. We can scarce believe that these are seriously intended, as we compare their awkward helplessness with the splendid details of the unswept floor. Critics have even queried whether they are not to be attributed to a later restoration in degenerate times. Such queries are easily set at rest if we notice the borders of pomegranates and grapes which surround them. They are equal to the best work in the ceiling. Only the Saviour and the Saints are abysmal failures. The reason is not far to seek. The artist is skilled in the representation of the stock, conventional themes. His copybooks and his head are full of birds and fruits and like sordid commonplaces of uninspired Roman art. He has skill, but neither imagination nor inspired ideals. Ask of him the familiar, and his art is skillful, automatic; ask the new, above all, the higher, the spiritual, and he is helpless in the extreme. A sorry beginning, this, of Christian art, but not unlike the beginning which men were making of a Christian world.

But if the beginning was feeble, progress was rapid. Returning along the beautiful Via Nomentana, with its villas and its matchless views across the Campagna, let us pay a brief visit to Santa Pudenziana, famed to be the oldest church in Rome, a modification, indeed, of that "house of Pudens,"

to which Paul refers in his epistle. Whether this identity be accepted or not, its antiquity is certain. And here, in this same fourth century, the half dome of the shallow apse was decorated with a mosaic (B 19) so new, so magnificent, that it is difficult to believe that scarce fifty years have passed since the helpless beginnings in Santa Costanza. All that was good in the earlier work, the birds, the fruits, the conventional patterns, have been abandoned. They are meaningless in the new art. On the other hand, the helpless figures and symbols of our timid Christian beginnings have been enormously expanded and enriched. In the center sits the Christ, a magnificent, kingly figure, splendid in vestments of crimson and gold. On either side sit the apostles, real men now, easy in posture and of marked individuality, men to whom the names that they have made famous might plausibly be attached. Their draperies are naturalistic, and remind us of the best Greek sculpture. Back of them is a curving arcade, a fine decorative feature, with bronze tiles edged with gold, reminiscent of the gilded bronze tiles that decorated the Pantheon and other Roman buildings in that day. Behind all rises the cross, rich with jewels in Byzantine manner, and on either side, the sacred cities, Jerusalem and Bethlehem, not symbols now, but real cities, with nearer and remoter buildings in unmistakable perspective. Above are bluish gray clouds and the signs of the four Evangelists in the heavens.

Two points need to be especially noted in this remarkable picture. First, it is a picture, not a flat decoration. Three centuries or more ago the mosaicist had begun the copying of pictures in mosaic. He had gradually abandoned the attempt, partly, no doubt, because he found it expensive and difficult, but partly, we may believe, because he felt that a picture, with its perspective and modeling, was inappropriate for a floor, and to some extent also for a wall, especially when the wall had dignity and significance. In three cen-

B 19, Semi-dome of Apse, S. Pudenziana, Rome. Mosaic, Fourth Century.

turies of evolution, picture had slowly given way to flat decoration, either figures in outline and silhouette, or conventional borders, and patterns. Now, picture has come back. We again have perspective and carefully modeled faces, figures, draperies. More than that, we have a very realistic picture, with emphasis laid upon individuality in the various persons, upon real cities, clouds, and thrones. The artist has either forgotten, or he has boldly rejected the results of three centuries of experience. Why this change?

It is the natural result of the adoption of the new religion. It is not that this religion is better or higher, though this was undoubtedly true. This alone would not make our mosaics pictorial and realistic again. It is simply that this religion is new, and its stories and personalities have, for a time, the interest of novelty. We can imagine the sudden fashionableness of these Bible stories, the headlong haste of the would-be-in-its to learn the names of the Christian worthies and the story of their lives. It is doubtful whether morals and spirituality at once received their due. It is sufficient for our purpose to note that a new theme acquired vogue, became, indeed, a fad for the brief period of transition. And the nature of this fad, having to do with persons and incidents, at once puts emphasis upon personality and natural environment, and art is stimulated to unprecedented progress in this direction. No one has ever thought of ranking the Age of Constantine along with the Age of Pericles or the Age of Lorenzo, as a creative period in art. In general it was a period of extreme decadence. Yet it would be difficult to find an example in either of those famous ages in which progress was more conspicuous than in the interval between Santa Costanza and Santa Pudenziana. To those to whom realism and pictorial effect is the criterion of excellence, this mosaic not unfrequently appeals as the greatest that has come down to us.

But it is impossible to look upon it without certain misgivings. The gray clouds are not beautiful, and the perspective dulls our perception of the shape of the apse. Compare it in reproduction with the half dome of Santa Maria in Trastevere (B 35). How vague and hesitating is our perception of shape and roundness in the one case, and how definite in the other! The contrast in color is even more to its disadvantage. The artist seems to feel this. He knows that clouds and city backgrounds must be dull and neutral, but he regrets it, and strains a point to get in as much gold and bright color as possible. The tiles are gilded; the women are clad in cloth of gold, the Christ in gold and crimson; the cross glitters with gems. What a pity that nature is not brighter hued if she is to serve to make beautiful the temple of the Lord! What artist devoted to nature and truth has not felt this? Above all things, when your art offers you not only color, but the sheen and splendor of gold, and the diamond sparkle of glass in cleavage, how irresistible the temptation! How irksome the thrall of sober-hued nature! Our artist feels the temptation and the thrall.

Let us wander into the next century, only a few steps away, in the glorious church of Santa Maria Maggiore, by far the most beautiful church in Rome. We will not notice for the moment the splendid colonnades, nor the rich mosaic floor, the most beautiful in the world, nor yet the great mosaics in the tribune, to which we must later return. Our immediate interest is in the mosaic pictures beneath the clerestory windows. They are comparatively small and the artist has made the mistake of putting in too many figures and in too small a scale, which unduly disparages his work, but we will make allowance for this. The interesting thing is to note the change of style. The story-telling fad is still on, and our artist is unusually ambitious, but he has yielded to temptation. The dull toned backgrounds are gone, and flat backgrounds of gold take their place. The figures are modeled

B 35, Tribune Arch and Apse, S. Maria in Trastevere, Rome. Mosaic, Twelfth Century.

into the round, but beyond this, perspective is sacrificed. The inevitable compromise is being made.

It is not so very far to the Baptistery of St. John in the Lateran, the venerable edifice in which Constantine was baptized, where we again resume our study with a mosaic of the fifth century, the ceiling of the little Oratory of St. John. Whether it is later in the century than the pictures we were just studying, we cannot say. It certainly is farther removed from the pictorial realism of Santa Pudenziana. For here is no picture at all, only a beautiful gold covered surface slightly diversified by figures and designs. The dishes of fruit, flanked by parrots, doves, ducks and quails, remind us of the older Roman taste, and are undoubtedly lineal descendants of the earlier tradition, though here arranged in attractive symmetry. They are pleasingly meaningless. Only the lamb in the center with the halo round its head suggests that this Roman of the old school found in the verse: "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," a congenial point of contact with the new faith.

But this mosaic gives us something new, a thing not unknown in the imperial mosaics, but unnoticed as yet in our studies. The gold covered ceiling is divided, according to the sections of the vaulting, by rich borders in olive brown, figured and festooned with flowers.

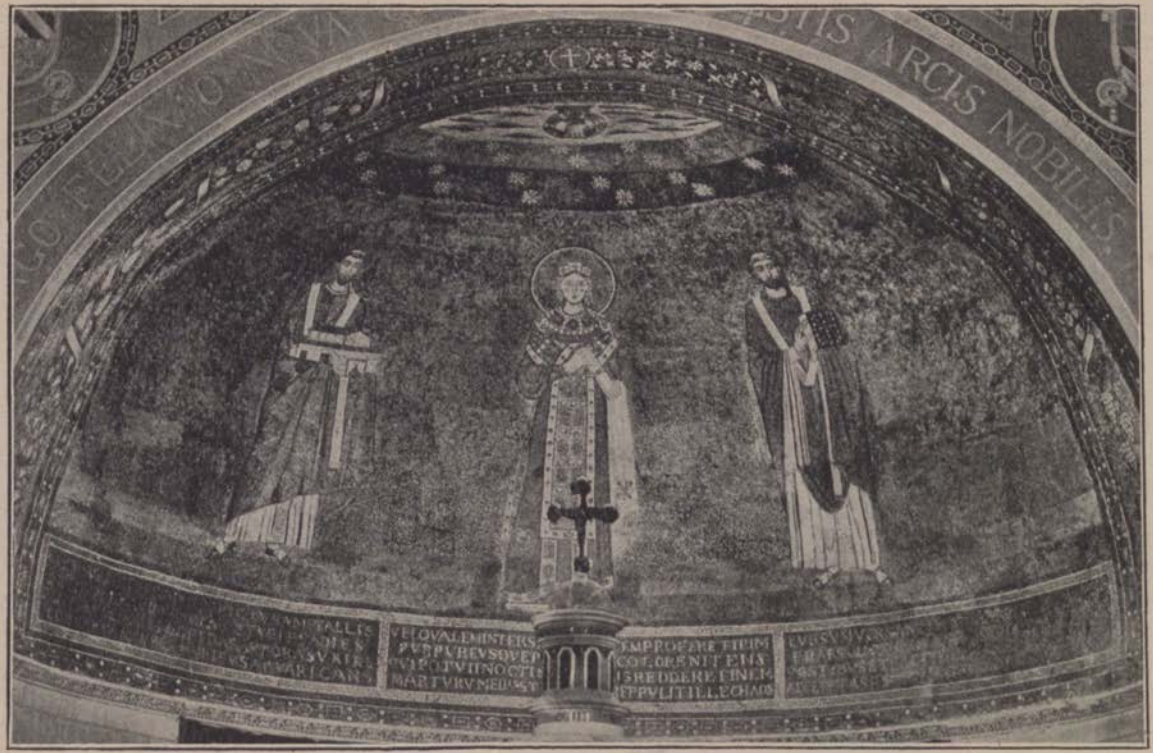
The important thing is the place of these borders. First, they run around the sides, following the junction of the ceiling with the side walls. Then they run diagonally from corner to corner, following the line of junction of the vaults, where in Gothic architecture we should find ribs or groins giving place in the center to a small circle where we should expect to find the keystone or boss. All this is so simple and so appropriate that we do not at first think of it as important, but it will be easiest to recognize in this simple example a great principle which from this time forth is going to control the farther development of the mosaics. We may call

this principle INTERPRETATION OF STRUCTURE. We shall find our most familiar illustration of this in the great Gothic churches of the North. The ribs or groins of the vaulting converge to points on the walls exactly over the pillars in the aisles. It would be easy to support the burden of this vaulted ceiling by round pillars and plain wall, and this at first they did. But they soon learned to use a clustered pier instead, each groin or rib of the ceiling being carried clear down to the floor as a separate shaft or rib, a number of these shafts being then grouped together to form a clustered pier. The advantage of this is not structural, for the round pillar would do just as well. It is purely interpretive. Each separate weight in the ceiling having its own supporting shaft, we have at once the feeling that the artist has thought about each and separately provided for its support. All good architecture is built with a regard for this need of interpretation, this necessity of satisfying the mind that all requirements of good structure have been properly met.

When the architect turned over the problem of decoration to the mosaicist, this same need was certain to be felt. In our little oratory the problem was of the simplest, and was solved in the simplest way, but in the nearby portico of San Venanzio, now a chapel of this same Baptistery, it is beginning to affect mosaic in quite a different way. The beautiful half dome here has no thought of picture. It is covered with splendid blue, which scintillates from the broken surfaces of the tesseræ, while over this dark blue surface is spread a vine-like scroll in pale shaded green, edged with gold. In spite of great changes, it reminds us a little of the scroll-like grape-vine back in Santa Costanza. But there is this important difference, that here the scrolls are arranged in regular perpendicular lines, tapering from the base of the dome upward toward the center where they all meet. From this time on, all mosaic scrolls are arranged in this way.

The suggestion of supporting power in a scroll like this is feeble enough, but so far as it suggests direction at all, it is important that this direction should be in the line of the perpendicular, that line which must ever be fundamental in architecture. It is needless to add that perspective has been wholly dropped, and the artist has forgotten even the suggestion of picture. So much in the sixth century.

But the famous old Baptistery has yet another contribution to make to our subject, this time a mosaic of the seventh century in the adjacent oratory of San Venanzio, a contribution reinforced by the fine seventh century mosaic of Saint Agnes without the Walls (B 31). Both these mosaics are of the Byzantine style which the brief control of the Eastern Empire over distracted Italy now brought into fashion at Rome. Ravenna, the capital of the Greek Emperor's legate, not unnaturally offers numerous examples, such as Justinian and his courtiers, and Theodora and her ladies, and above all, the splendid procession of maidens from Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, all of them naturally of somewhat earlier date than the Roman examples. The transition seems abrupt as we go from our scroll covered blue to these gold backgrounds with their stiff, immovable figures. Degenerate pictures, we call them, — the critics call them, almost without a dissenting voice. Yes, as pictures, they are certainly degenerate. But when we dismiss them with this easy conclusion are we not overlooking something? In fact, the eastern artists, their background of tradition being Greek art rather than Roman, their traditional subjects gods and men, rather than grape-vines and ducks, did not so easily lapse into scrolls as their Roman contemporaries, but struggled still with saints and prophets. Yet as interest in personality and story waned, as color and gold banished perspective, and the importunities of nature were definitely silenced, the need of interpreting structure again made itself felt. The figures themselves must do duty now in giving direction to eye and thought.



B 31. Semi-dome of Apse, S. Agnese Fuori le Mura, Rome. Mosaic, Seventh Century.

Saint and prophet had entered the church of old, conscious only of their mission to men, human in act, in posture, in impulse, knowing no law but the law of life. Slowly they became conscious of the great lines and symmetries about them. The vast colonnades and the motionless pillars fill the church as with a solemn music which slowly enwraps the mind till individual utterance is hushed and alien impulse is wooed into willing conformity. Ease yields to dignity, and spontaneity is insensibly surrendered to symmetry and repose. Fluttering draperies learn to compose themselves in straight and unbroken lines, arms are folded or hang motionless, and solemn faces look out upon us with the calm that reminds us of the eternal things. Life has lost its usual prerogatives, — nay, holds them in abeyance, and in willing sympathy, accepts instead the solemn majesty of the church. The individual withers and the church is more and more.

We may freely admit that the artist was not conscious of the great principle to which he was conforming. No doubt, too, lack of skill in pictorial presentation, had much to do with it. It is probable enough that he would have spoiled his mosaics if he had been able to do so. Yet if we had criticised his figures and exhorted him to greater lifelikeness, it is more than probable that he would have conceded the justice of the criticism, and yet would have added: "Somehow, I like them better this way." In so doing he would but have voiced the mute appeal of his great building for decorations *in harmony with its own nature*, the underlying reason for all decorative conventions in art.

It is interesting to note the suggestiveness of these decorative figures in mosaics. The procession of maidens in Sant' Apollinare is ranged above a colonnade whose stately intervals and symmetry it echoes and emphasizes. Especially significant is the half dome of Saint Agnes. Rich borders surround it above, below, within, without, thus recognizing its character. The space thus framed by these borders is

then laid off in horizontal zones and covered with mosaic ground, pale green below, for turf, then a broad band of gold as background for the figures, then small bands of varying tints above, filling out the half dome. These horizontal bands once laid off, the figures are arranged perpendicular to the base, all radiating from the upper center of the dome. Straight scarfs and folds of drapery emphasize this straightness and radial direction. Draw a circle and imagine it as the representation of a solid object. It can only be a disk. Now draw foreshortened curves from top to bottom and others from side to side, and it will no longer suggest a disk but a sphere. Witness the usual map of the hemisphere. Our artists have adopted the familiar principle of parallels of latitude and meridian lines in the arrangement of background and figures, and as a result, their half dome, instead of being obscured as by the picture of Santa Pudenziana, is positively emphasized. Compare the splendid half dome of Santa Maria in Trastevere, decorated on this principle.

We now have all the important factors in the great mosaics of the middle ages. The mosaicists had permanently abandoned picture, relying for their effect upon color splendor and upon decorative arrangement. Their decorations remind us little of life, but life is not the only thing in art. On the other hand, they are the most interpretive of all decorations.

The disasters which fell ever more heavily upon Italy brought art to lower and lower humiliation. Few things could be more helpless than the mosaics of San Marco in Rome, or Santa Prassede, both of the ninth century. After that, the mosaics cease altogether for a couple of centuries, only to revive, first in Sicily, under the revivifying influence of those wonderful Norman freebooters who in the eleventh century were writing their names across the bewildering palimpsest of Sicilian civilization, and finally in the twelfth century in Rome, where the art has left some splendid memorials of its glorious period. Such are San Clemente in whose

lustrous scrolls we recognize our mosaic of six centuries before in the great Baptistery. Saint John in the Lateran has a half dome decorated on the same principle as Saint Agnes, though the radial figures and their perpendicular names are a little lost in the vast expanse. In the great half dome of Santa Maria Maggiore we have the richest borders and the most splendid details of rosette and scroll and peacock plumage ever conceived in art, but the artist has made the mistake of making his detailed work too fine, so that it is lost to the distant view, and still more serious, he has tried to combine scrolls and radial figures and center medallion in quite an impossible way. The medallion is cut out first, then the figures have next choice, and lastly, the accommodating vine is twined over the left-over space or scrap. No design is good which contains scrap, that is, space not beautiful or planned in itself, but merely left over from the cutting out of something else.

In Santa Maria in Trastevere the mediæval ideal seems fully attained. The borders, seen at close range do not compare with those in Santa Maria Maggiore, but they "carry" to the very end of the church. The great dome, splendid with its color, is dominated by colossal radial figures whose unapologized straightness is emphasized by every means in the artist's power. The face wall on either side the tribune glows with gold, framed with rich borders and appropriate figure decoration. Underneath this half dome, like a splendid foundation, runs a band of purplish brown on which appear in linked regularity, like a bracelet on a woman's arm, the thirteen sheep which represent Christ and the apostles. And below all this still, a broad band or ribbon of bordered mosaic picture, stretching around to the face walls on either side. The whole seen by mellow afternoon light makes the most splendid church wall ever gazed upon by man.

But we have dropped a word above which is disturbingly

suggestive. We spoke of the broad lower band of mosaic *picture.* If we examine one of these sections, the Nativity, the word is seen to be no accident. Symmetries are disregarded, the angels even refusing to adjust their wings in the usual accommodating manner. And despite the gold background there is again a vague hint of perspective unknown in the arch above. Other sections betray the same tendency toward depth, spontaneity, life, though their achievements in this direction are feeble enough. What is disturbing the perfect equilibrium of the mediæval ideal?

Our riddle is solved when we learn that our twelfth century mosaic received this final addition in the *thirteenth* century. And then we recall that in this century were born Dante, first of the moderns, Niccolò Pisano and Cimabue, creators of modern sculpture and painting, not to mention Bacon and others who awoke with the dawn of modern thought. The Renaissance is here. Life is again the theme, and the art which is its interpreter chafes against the symmetries and the gold and jeweled splendors so foreign to its nature. Soon the demand will be for something more facile and more docile to the artist's will. Cimabue, beginning as a mosaicist, ends as a painter. The doom of the great mosaics is sealed.

CHAPTER III

THE BURSTING OF THE BONDS

WE have seen that during the latter days of the thirteenth century the angel of the Renaissance troubled the quiet waters of mediæval art. The change was slight in outward effect, but in principle it was revolutionary, and marked the dawn of a new era, the full significance of which we were to learn later. Fate willed, however, that Rome should have little part in this new era. Strange as it may seem, from the time of Dante to the time of Lorenzo, Rome did almost nothing in art. To her belonged, in theory at least, the earth and the fulness thereof. Into her coffers flowed the world's tribute. But sorry days were at hand, days of the deepest humiliation that she had known since the time of the Goths. The empire that still called itself Roman knew nothing of Rome, save to dread and humiliate her, and that new power which had displaced the shattered authority of the emperor seemed tottering to its fall. For seventy years the pope was an exile, and during this period, Rome, robbed of both empire and pope, sank into utter stagnation. With the return of the popes, prosperity did not immediately return. The long prostration had become chronic, and the days when Italy was voicing her supreme message to the world were lost to Rome.

It was in Florence that the new light dawned. Rivals briefly disputed her supremacy, but before the first generation of the new art had passed, that supremacy was established, never again to be challenged by any Italian city.

It is difficult fully to account for this supremacy. In a

general way we must associate it with the artisanship which about this time developed so amazingly in Florence as in other Italian cities. Knowing nothing of the pampering of tribute-fed Rome, her life was as naturally creative as Rome's was parasitic. Hand artisanship, too, has always been the prompter of the brain and the educator of taste. It is certainly not an accident that the two busiest centers of hand artisanship the world ever knew, Athens and Florence, have been its leaders in creative art, while stall-fed capitals like Rome and Washington are powerless to create the art which they are privileged to buy.

We have traced in the mosaics the development of art through the long period of subsidence which intervenes like a great gulf between the art of the Greeks and that of the Renaissance. The mosaics are at once the most distinctive and the best preserved of the mediæval arts. Painting existed, however, and despite its more perishable character, is preserved to us in numerous examples. For the most part, painting served the minor purposes of church decoration. It furnished the altarpieces, that is, the pictures of saints and of episodes from their lives, which formed the backing or decoration of altars erected to them. While these altarpieces were not wall decorations, and so were not subject to quite the same requirements as the mosaics, the tendency was much the same. It was important to catch the eye and lead it to the all-important spot, and so rich color on a gold background was much prized. Even in a later day, when naturalism had made deep inroads upon decorative color, it was the custom to stipulate, in contracts for church painting, that a certain proportion of the space should be covered with ultramarine blue, that expensive and dearly beloved color. What a light that throws upon the relative importance attached to color and to naturalness in this early art!

These altars, too, were nearly always placed in small niches or chapels surrounded with impressively symmetrical archi-

tecture. Pillared aisle and sheltering arch enclosed with impressive symmetry the altar and its decoration, which must needs be symmetrical in its turn. Simple mechanical features increased these exactions. The picture must needs be protected when not specially exhibited to the faithful, and for this purpose doors were used, which, when opened, must needs be sightly, that is, decorative in their turn. Hence arose the three-fold picture, or triptych, a larger central picture between two smaller ones, which must needs match each other, and, in turn, laid so much the more emphasis upon symmetry in the central part. After doors ceased to be used, the painting of these three-fold pictures with superb architectural frames continued, and even after the compartment frame was abandoned, the artists continued for generations to think out their picture in three parts, and the perfect bilateral symmetry of the early altarpieces long seemed to them a fundamental law of art. The Madonna and her throne occupy the exact center of the picture, and the angels or saints on either side are exact mates, man for man, woman for woman, all, even to the bowing of the head and the direction of the eye.

It is easy to see why this symmetry was desired, but equally easy to see that it was very unnatural. Living beings do not spontaneously arrange themselves in this symmetrical manner, and if we devote ourselves seriously to the representation of life, one of the first things we shall seek is the freedom and spontaneity which is its most obvious characteristic. Yet art can never quite surrender its demand for symmetry or regularity of a certain kind. Take the altarpiece down from the altar, out from under its Gothic canopy, and away from its pillared aisles, simplify the frame until it becomes a commonplace, and even so you do not quite destroy the symmetry of its setting. The simplest of picture frames, even the square card of the photographer, is still symmetrical and dictates a certain symmetry in the picture itself. The

harmonies of art are not inevitable and predetermined. They are wrought out under the pressure of conflicting forces, and are necessarily of the nature of a compromise. The mediæval art yielded fully to the demand for regularity, and perfect bilateral symmetry of the mosaics and the altar-pieces was the result. Some of the later realists have utterly revolted against regularity, as Andrea del Sarto in his Visit of the Magi, with the result that their art becomes careless and undignified. Continually, the battle went on, with advantage now to one principle, now to the other. Not till near the culmination of the Renaissance was a satisfactory compromise effected between symmetry and lawlessness. This compromise we may call *balance.*

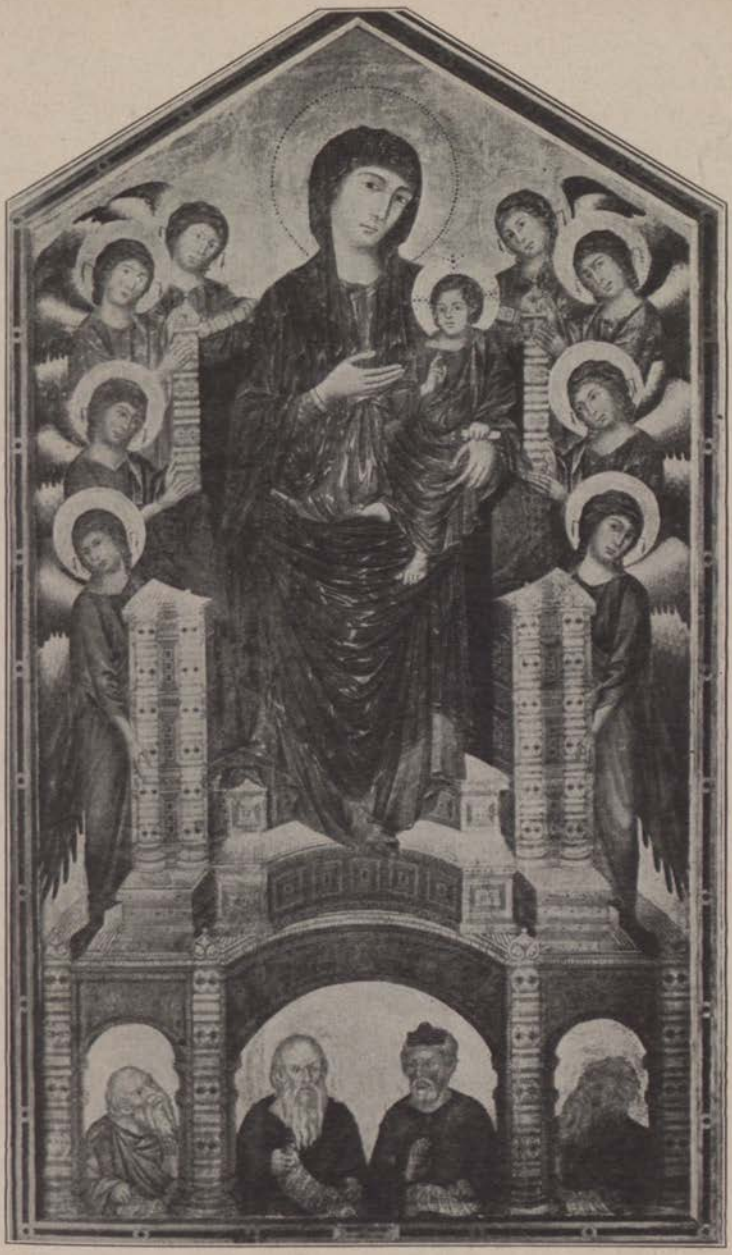
We have all seen a pair of apothecary's scales. Two identical pans hang from the ends of the suspended beam, the one for the commodity, the other for the weights. Each pan is exactly like the other. This is symmetry, the principle on which the old altarpieces were constructed. And we have seen a steelyard. Here we have one pan suspended from the short end of a beam, while on the other and long end slides a weight which may be adjusted to offset the pan. This is a balance, the principle governing the construction of the newer pictures. Such a picture is Titian's Madonna of the Pesaro Family in which the Madonna herself is balanced by a flag, not in the least like the Madonna, but a perfectly satisfactory pictorial equivalent. Since that picture was painted art has never returned to the principle of rigid bilateral symmetry. We must of course be on our guard against taking such an analogy too seriously. A steelyard would not make a good composition for a picture, but it suggests the principle on which all good pictures must be composed. It is the principle of pictorial equivalence as contrasted with the principle of complete identity. The new principle is far more difficult, but far better suited to the needs of life.

In defining our terms, we have trespassed far beyond the

limits of our present subject. It is in order now to note that the mediæval art is almost always based on the principle of symmetry, while the art of the Renaissance, which we are now approaching, is based on the principle of balance. Of course the new art does not at once discover and master this difficult principle. At first we note only a restiveness under the old restraints, a revolt, sometimes very half-hearted, against symmetry, and a great deal of confusion and disorder, from which art again recoiled, returning to the old-time symmetry, with which, however, it could not remain content. Meanwhile it was, of course, struggling with other problems of sentiment and interpretation which complicated the problem of arrangement and frequently overshadowed it.

It may be well farther to recall that decoration, that is, the adaptation or subordination of art to something else, say architecture, always tends toward symmetry rather than mere balance. Pillars and arches are almost always arranged in impressive symmetry, and paintings placed within them harmonize best when absolutely symmetrical. Even an elaborate Gothic frame on a picture has much the same compelling influence toward symmetry. The old painting could therefore give a very good account of itself, and could interpose a very stout resistance to the freedom and seeming lawlessness which, under the pulsings of new life, art was striving to achieve.

In the Accademia of Florence hangs a picture attributed to Cimabue (B 49) which typifies the mediæval altarpiece. The Madonna is seated on a sumptuous throne centrally placed. The frame, though plain, has a pointed top (a very important feature). The background is perfectly flat and of figured gold, and angels are ranged symmetrically on either side. Here are the two great characteristics of the decorative mediæval painting, the flat decorative background, and the symmetrical composition, symmetrical even to the tip of the angels' heads. Sometimes this symmetry is ridiculous, as in

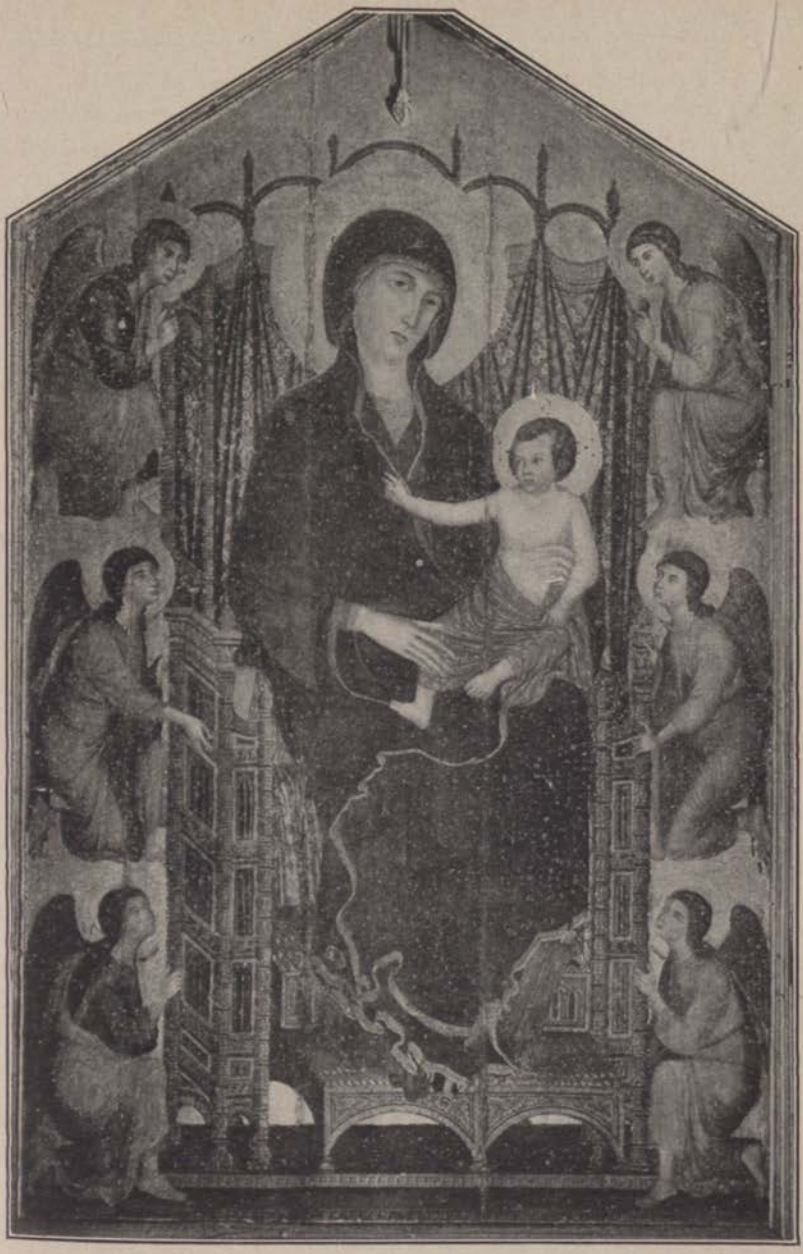


B 50, Madonna Enthroned (Rucellai Madonna). S. M. Novella, Florence. Cimabue, 1240?–1302?

the symmetrical position of the two knees and the folds of drapery which hang between them, at the same time that the artist has placed one foot a whole step higher than the other.

One or two minor characteristics should also be noted. The Madonna is of exaggerated size as compared with the other figures. This is an old-time convention by which the artists sought to represent symbolically the superior spiritual estate of the chief subjects of their art. This convention was conspicuous in Egyptian art and may be traced even in the Parthenon frieze, where the artist never represents a slave as quite the same size as his master. Noticeable, too, are the false high-lights which spread like a cobweb of gold over the draperies of Madonna and Child, symbol, apparently, of the celestial character of the wearer, while the true high-lights, or exposed surfaces of the drapery folds, are quite independently represented. In all these particulars the picture is completely representative of the late mediæval painting.

We must now wend our way to the great church of Santa Maria Novella, to which we shall have to return again and again as we trace the evolution of Florentine art. In the barren Chapel of the Rucellai hangs the famous picture which perpetuates their powerful name, the Rucellai Madonna (B 50), also attributed to Cimabue, and justly famed as the beginning of the Renaissance. It is so nearly like the one just described that we at first easily confound the two Nevertheless, all that characterizes the new art is suggested in this picture and is lacking in the other. The narrow line between these two pictures is the boundary between old and new. First, symmetry is deliberately sacrificed. We have the same great Madonna, the same sumptuous throne and attendant figures, but the throne is deliberately turned sidewise so that we see athwart one side of it, while the other side is concealed. The Madonna likewise turns sidewise,



B 50, Madonna Enthroned (Rucellai Madonna).
S. M. Novella, Florence. Cimabue, 1240?–1302?

one knee is placed higher than the other in proper correspondence with the feet, and the Child is thrown conspicuously out of center. Trifling but extremely significant, the conspicuous gold border upon the dark robe of the Madonna is arranged in careless irregularity across the picture. None of these things would amount to much if it were not that they are things easy to arrange symmetrically and things which always have been so arranged until now. It is not as though the artist were struggling with a new subject which refuses to conform to the old law. It is the old subject, and he is going out of his way to break with the old tradition. It will be noted, too, that we have the beginnings of perspective in the arrangement of the side of the chair, the proper location of the legs on the floor, and so forth. Finally, the cobweb of decorative high-lights is gone, the Child is significantly represented as half nude, while Madonna and Child are obviously more human.

But noting all these innovations, we must now recognize their limitations. The artist is plainly frightened and is quite unable to accept, — perhaps unable to see, — the full consequences of his new departure. For instance, he has turned the chair, and we see one side of it running somewhat diagonally across the room. But he refuses to let the front of the chair turn also. Not to have that foot-rest line with the bottom of the picture and the frame to which it is so near, would look terribly, he seems to think; and so while the chair turns if you look at the side of it, it refuses to turn, if you look at the front of it. Worse still, when we get to the top of the picture. The frame, being a pointed one, is very exacting as regards symmetry. Now the high back posts of the throne are supposed to support a figured hanging, and the post on our left does serve as such a support. But if the other post were to serve to support the other side, the hanging would not be in the center, for it must be remembered that the chair, or at least the back part of it, has been swung

round sidewise. To displace this great hanging, however, which fills the whole background of the picture, seems to our artist quite out of the question, and so he ignores the anatomy of his chair behind, as previously he had done in front, and carries the corner post round to where he needs it. The picture remains symmetrical as a whole, and we must confess, so far as present results are concerned, might better have been completely so. Art has not gained much, as yet, by its revolts and its new liberty. That is much the way with revolts and new liberties of all sorts. The first result is confusion and inconsistency which makes the new order an easy mark for criticism on the part of the partisans of the old order.

It is significant of the good soil into which, here in Florence, the new seed was to fall, that the work of Cimabue was met, not by criticism, but by enthusiastic approval. It must have been something more than ordinary insight which enabled the Florentines to recognize in this picture an epoch-making achievement, and to welcome its advent with triumphal processions and jubilation. Perhaps this story is a myth, a recognition in retrospect of the great principles which the picture embodies, but even so it has its significance. Cimabue, here, in truth "burst the bonds of mediæval tradition."

Other peculiarities are more interesting than important. For instance, the hanging or curtain in the background is of figured stuff, but these figures are regularly disposed over the surface in spite of the fact that the curtain is supposed to hang in folds. This is due to the traditional practice of covering the surface with a thin layer of plaster and executing decorative figures upon it in relief before the painting is begun. The figures, thus executed, cannot adjust themselves to the folds which are painted on afterwards. This is fairly characteristic of the blending of old and new in incompatible union, which characterizes all Cimabue's art.

We last find Cimabue in the glorious Church of Saint

Francis at Assisi where he is so soon to be eclipsed by his great pupil. One work in the Lower Church, however, undoubtedly to be ascribed to him, deserves further note. It is again a Madonna and Child with an angel on either side, and out at one side another figure, Saint Francis. It is a *fresco* and differs in consequence from the *tempera* paintings we have been considering. But the significant difference is in the normal scale of the Madonna who now scarce exceeds in size the other figures. Cimabue was clearly tired of the artificiality of the old convention. Another seeming change is the complete non-symmetry of the picture by the addition of Saint Francis, a break with the old tradition which does not seem very subtle or fortunate. This, however, is probably unintentional. The great wall on which this picture is painted was later divided into regular panels and its decoration completed by Giotto. It looks very much as though Cimabue's picture had once been larger than now, with another figure on the left matching the Saint Francis, probably the usual figure of Saint Clara. If so, Cimabue apparently painted his picture with little thought of other pictures to be painted later, and when Giotto came to divide the whole wall up into uniform panels, he found Cimabue's picture too large to fit, and rather than spoil the symmetry of the whole wall, he trimmed off the end of the over-large picture. Some things in the character of the picture indicate such a trimming. If so, Cimabue never departs widely from the character of the older art. He retains its flat background, its symmetry, its general character. But he is restive under all these limitations. This is the significant thing. Art had spent a thousand years in perfecting this style with its comely symmetries and its golden splendor, and no sooner is the task achieved, as in the great mosaic of Santa Maria in Trastevere, than restless art tires of its own creation and begins to work out a new ideal. Cimabue was educated in the old order, knew the older art, long accepted it even, but

finally becomes restive and strives for a new art, new principles, new ideals. But that new art was not to be his. He saw and greeted it from afar, only to resign its quest to younger and less trammeled spirits.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST OF THE MODERNS

THE greatest of Cimabue's achievements remains to be recorded, namely his discovery of Giotto. Whether it be true, as we are told, that he found him, a shepherd boy, drawing a picture of a sheep upon a stone, and asked him to come to his studio, we do not know, but it is very like unto the truth. It was from nature, from real sheep and real men, that Giotto received his impulse toward art, not from the fettered art of the past. It is certain, too, that he studied with Cimabue. Whether Cimabue greatly influenced him, we do not know, but if he did, the result is much to his credit. In any case, he seems never to have fettered Giotto with the traditions from which he himself had not been able wholly to escape. Some of Giotto's early pictures smack of this mediæval symmetry and remind us of Cimabue, but these resemblances are few and slight. Giotto's pictures have their limitations, but they are the limitations of a new art not perfectly mastered rather than the limitations of tradition. They may seem old-fashioned to us, now that the centuries have made old the fashion that he taught, but certainly to Cimabue and the people of his time the art was amazingly new. He does not take a traditional picture, symmetrical and formal, and timidly give it a few modern touches. He starts his pictures as though there had never been any symmetries, taking characters and actions direct from life. More than this, he is infinitely clever in suggesting incidents which the painter cannot fully express. It is very rare that a man in any field is able to wipe the past

quite off the slate and start new, as though there had been no past, and yet with all the experience and skill which the past had accumulated. Something of this supreme newness Giotto brought into art. The fact that he did not master all the intricacies of drawing and perspective which the new art required is of very little consequence in our estimate of his genius. This detailed mastery is the work of the hack. It is as nothing compared with the formulating of a new program, a new ideal.

Giotto is one of the three greatest names in Italian art. The limitations of his technique are a barrier to the appreciation of his art by those familiar with the later finished style of Michelangelo or Titian. Yet Giotto is a greater spirit than Titian and worthy of a place in our honor, alongside of Michelangelo himself, the one the first, and the other the last great artist of the Italian Renaissance. His was a wholesome and tonic personality. Sanity and wholesome mirth followed him through the length of Italy. Even his name is significant. Christened Ambrose, or Ambrogio, as the Italians call it, the ending, *otto*, diminutive and endearing, was added while a child and retained when a man. And then because Ambrogiotto was too long for easy use, it was shortened to Giotto, precisely as a boy christened Albert may later be known as Bertie. But the Italians have, not one but many expressive endings, and it means much that this one was chosen rather than *ino* or *accio* which we find in the nicknames of other artists. It means that men liked the little Ambrose, and that they continued to like him after he became a man.

Giotto seems to have begun his career with the great works in the Lower Church of Assisi, close beside those of his master. There are first of all the frescoes in the central vault, over the high altar and the tomb of St. Francis. They form a group by themselves, less distinctive of the artist's temperament, perhaps, than those of Padua or Florence, but not

less admirable. He was not yet altogether free. First of all there was the architectural problem with which he had to reckon and to which he has made necessary but admirable concessions. And second, there seems to have been an intellectual environment, doubtless that of the monks, and the scholasticism of his time, which he is not altogether free to ignore. Doubtless, too, he has not wholly found himself. He was learning in this same time to scoff at the asceticism of the Franciscans, for the infinite health of Giotto's nature had nothing in common with the morbidity which the successors of Francis so speedily manifested. But he had not yet won his spurs, and had almost certainly to follow in part the suggestions of others.

Such pictures as the Vows of Saint Francis are suggestive of this strange alliance. Let us take, for instance, the Vow of Obedience (B 55). It is a broad-spreading triangle that Giotto is called upon to fill, a triangle bounded on either side by mighty arches which Giotto has made doubly impressive by the rich borders with which he has bounded his space. In a space thus shaped, thus situated, and thus emphasized, an unsymmetrical picture was unthinkable. The center of the triangle is occupied by a quaint little architectural structure difficult to characterize. It is hardly a building, scarce more than a canopy supported by pillars the size of curtain poles — a device of which Giotto is fond. He wastes no time on pretentious architecture. It is fair to add perhaps that he could not have made a very artistic use of it if he had tried, architect though he was. Even in the fullness of the Renaissance more pictures were spoiled by architecture than by the lack of it. These flimsy, architectural constructions in Giotto's picture serve on the one hand the simple purpose of dividing his space without wasting much of it, and, on the other, a symbolistic purpose. They suggest a temple or a palace, though they do not represent one.

B 55, Obedience. Lower Church, S. Francesco, Assisi. Giotto, 1266?–1336.

This little canopy leaves a triangle in the top in which stands the figure of St. Francis, with an angel on either side. He turns his hands outward, and his feet are visible to show the famous stigmata. The angels, kneeling, fill out the space in a satisfactory manner. But sincerity compels us to admit that there is nothing very thrilling about this representation.

Below, under the canopy, which is divided into three compartments, we have in the center a very ill-favored female figure who holds one finger to her lips in token of silence, and with the other hand lays upon the neck of the kneeling monk, a yoke, such as was used by the Italians in harnessing a single animal for draught purposes. The kneeling monk accepts the yoke from the female figure, who represents the abstract idea of the Rules of the Order. Giotto, never a devotee of sensuous beauty as such, was, after all, able to represent beauty of a dignified and lofty type. Here he purposely avoids it. He would avoid the impression that the Rules of the Order are attractive. On the contrary, they are forbidding and austere.

In the left-hand compartment is a figure whose meaning we should never guess if we were not taught. She has a double face, one behind and one before, but duplicity is far from being the suggestion. It is the traditional way of representing Prudence, who looks backward as well as forward, studying consequences as well as prospects, a suggestive symbol when you know it, but one that few would ever guess. In the right-hand compartment is a strange, draped figure which we recognize finally as a centaur. The centaur was one of the three or four items from the repertory of pagan art which appealed sufficiently to the popular imagination to survive in Christian art. Inasmuch as the personnel of this pagan art, far from being non-existent to the Christian mind, was thought of as being jealous and hostile, the pagan divinities speedily became demons. Figures like Apollo did not long persist. There was nothing character-

istic about them. But the streaming beard of Kronos with his scythe, the trident of Neptune, and the Centaur, stick fast and are turned to account. The Centaur represents evil in one form or another, and now in Giotto's picture, draped in a long robe, he seems to try to enter this enclosure in disguise. But, to his consternation, as he enters, the robe stays behind. He throws up his hands in horror, realizing that his true character is revealed. The symbolism again is significant if not easy.

It is needless to go farther into detail. In every subject our symbolism is arbitrary, which means that it is but feebly artistic. A fundamental condition of a good picture is that it shall be self-interpreting. This the stilted symbolism of the middle ages did not permit. Men did not seem to think it necessary that symbols should explain themselves, because they were so educated in this symbolism that they scarce realized its artificiality. Who objects to writing, on the ground that the letters of our alphabet are arbitrary? We learn them so young and find them so serviceable that their arbitrariness is quite forgotten. So with mediæval art, and so with this first chapter in Giotto's art.

The Vow of Chastity is similarly stilted and scholastic, if not quite so intricate. But as we come to the Vow of Poverty (B 56), Giotto was there freer to be himself or was indebted to a far better suggestion. It stirs our deepest feeling to see this vow of the Franciscans represented in the guise of the marriage of Saint Francis to Poverty, the ceremony being performed by Christ. Nor does it require much explanation to understand the figure of this haggard and woebegone bride, whose robes hang in tatters, whose face has lost all comeliness, and whose youth has long disappeared. But upon her unlovely countenance Saint Francis gazes with all the ardor of a lover. Nor can any fail to perceive the significance of the figures gathered about, — the dog that barks furiously at the bride while the ceremony is in progress, the youth

B 56, Poverty. Lower Church, S. Francesco, Assisi. Giotto, 1266?–1336.

below who throws a stone at her, the substantial burghers to the right who turn doubtfully away. The choice of Francis calls forth at once the jest of the frivolous and the skepticism of the thoughtful, as such a choice has ever done.

The immense advantage of this picture as compared with the others is that it is self-interpreting. The thoughtful observer would not fail to guess the essential meaning of it all. To some one, in all probability to Giotto himself, we owe this new departure. Here is still symbolism, but it is true pictorial symbolism, symbolism which carries its own label, and better still, symbolism which is richly charged with feeling. Symbols which are arbitrary, which acquire meaning only as the result of outside interpretation, and whose meaning when acquired is intellectual rather than emotional, may have great value in other connections, but they belong to the world of science rather than to the world of art. This is the sufficient condemnation of vast quantities of Christian art, and is in sharpest contrast with the self-explained art of the Greeks.

From this time on, and perhaps as the result of the picture last mentioned, Giotto seems to have been free. The adjacent vault ceilings are covered in part with his work, magnificent in color, for no artist of his time or any other, knew the value of color better than he, simple and natural and yet superbly appropriate in their grouping and, above all things, invariably charged with feeling of the straightforward, childlike sort which appeals to unspoiled spirits.

The splendid Arena Chapel in Padua is one of the most successfully decorated buildings in the world. It has the advantage of being of moderate size, and seems to have been decorated by Giotto in a single period without interruption or diversion of thought. Our attention to this incomparable work must necessarily be brief. The long series of pictures represent the story of the Virgin and Christ. Take, for instance, the Presentation of the Virgin (B 58), grotesque in its

B 58, The Presentation of the Virgin.
Chapel of the Arena, Padua.
Giotto, 1266?–1336.

architectural setting but magnificent in its truth to life and sentiment. The temple is a curious little sentinel box, ill-drawn, with faulty perspective, a symbol at best, for Giotto knew what a temple was like. Up the stairs walks the little Virgin, the loveliest and most unspoiled, unconscious creature imaginable, greeted by the benignant old priest and watched with just a touch of solicitude and pride by the mother and friends who stand below. Nothing strange about it except its complete lack of artificiality, and the easy confidence with which the artist rests his case upon the sentiments of the unspoiled heart.

To choose again at random, let us notice the Nativity. The mother, too noble to be merely pretty, too healthy to be sentimental, fondles the child, close wrapped in Italian fashion, while Joseph sits by, fast asleep. Giotto's repertory of suggestion is limitless. He would have us understand that Joseph is not the father of the child, hence this lessened interest which, were he the father, would be inappropriate. In the heavens above appear the angels with their song of good will, while near by stand the shepherds with their flocks. Contrary to all the traditions of art, these shepherds turn their backs upon us, or nearly so, gazing at the angels in the sky above. Giotto is drawing for the first time now upon that psychic suggestion which is to play so large a part in the art of the later time. He wants us to see, and fully see, the angels which are so important a part of the story and yet are pictorially subordinated. To be sure that we see them, his shepherds look at them, knowing that we will look where they look, in deference to a universal habit.

(B 61) The Flight into Egypt is suggestive of the resource and of the limitations of Giotto's art. Nothing could exceed the naturalness of this group as they trudge along, more particularly of the donkey which Giotto alone among the artists of this time drew without any humanizing tendency. Notice

B 61, The Flight into Egypt. Chapel of the Arena, Padua. Giotto, 1266?–1336.

a donkey by Ghirlandajo. He pricks up his ears and looks out of his eyes straight forward, with a lively curiosity at the new born babe, completely, though unintentionally, humanized by the unobservant artist. But Giotto has given us the unparticipating stolidity of the donkey which has given him his metaphorical character in human speech, and which here adds that touch of nature that makes the whole world kin. The seriousness of the mother as she bears the sacred child, the homely loyalty of Joseph, and the gossiping frivolity of the attendants, all are true to life, of which Giotto is the obvious prophet. But the background is nothing less than amusing. Little hills that look as if carved out of beeswax, with trees like feather dusters stuck here and there, are Giotto's way of telling us that the flight took place through a mountainous and wooded country. Yet Giotto was born in the mountains, and pastured his sheep among the hills of Mugello. No one knew better than he what mountains and woods were like. He simply does not try to represent them, believing that they surpass the limits of art, as indeed in so many pictures they have done. Giotto's program is naturalism in living creatures and symbolism in their setting, where naturalism seems to him impossible, perhaps undesirable.

The Baptism of Christ is similarly significant. Jesus stands in the water and John is pouring water upon his head. On the one side stand the angels, traditional guardians of the Saviour's garments, beautiful figures, though of the quaint Giottesque type; and on the other stand witnesses of the event, only two, and these two different in a significant manner, for Giotto never uses an unnecessary figure. Of these witnesses one wears a halo and the other does not. They represent the two classes of witnesses without whose combined testimony the event would seem not fully accredited. The disciple of John, so soon to become the disciple of Jesus, wears the halo, as becomes a saint in the

Church. The other, the casual spectator, sympathetic but not a follower, wears no halo. We thus have outside and unbiased testimony. A similar thoughtfulness is manifest in the representation of the hair, which, on all the figures, save that of Jesus, is curly, but the hair of Jesus hangs in straight flat masses as wet hair should. You can imagine the water dripping from the ends. Why not, says one? Yet it is to be noted that in the whole history of Christian art, no other artist bethought himself that hair when wet looked different from hair when dry. It is thinking about these things that makes the difference between naturalness and symbolism, and it is in this difference that the very essence of Giotto's art consists.

(B 64) The Corruption of Judas is a masterpiece, a simple group of three or four figures which is a study in psychology as well as in action. And the whole is supplemented by a marvellously suggestive symbolism, as in the case of the halo on Judas, which has half disappeared and is vanishing away, for it was in this moment that he lost his claim to sainthood. But notice these figures. Christian tradition has blackened the character of both Judas and his seducers; on the one hand was treason, sometimes imagined as deliberate from the beginning; on the other hand was cold-blooded vindictiveness against righteousness. Little sympathy has been wasted upon these personalities that form the background of the great tragedy. Yet look at these representations of the priestly party. It is significant that they are identical in feature and in spirit with the benignant priest who welcomes the little virgin in the earlier painting. They are substantial, well-meaning men who are guarding the interests that they are set to guard by unwelcome but seemingly necessary means. And Judas, not the black-featured villain that Leonnardo makes him — his eye gleams with a strange and fanatical lustre, an unbalanced, misguided man, a fanatic who sees things in false perspective, a weakling who served the purpose

B 64, The Corruption of Judas. Chapel of the Arena, Padua. Giotto, 1266?–1336.

of strength. How much more generously, how much more plausibly Giotto has told the story! It is interesting to note that the same sympathy is the basis of the marvellous interpretation which the whole world goes to Oberammergau to see. Without sympathy there is no understanding.

One remaining figure must not escape our notice. Back of Judas stands Satan, almost the only representation of this character in Giotto's art. He is included here because the narrative required it, "Satan having entered into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray him." Think what it means to have told the whole Bible story with scarce a reference to the diabolism that was so common in human thought. Centuries after this, a strong-minded man can throw his inkstand at the devil, and can speak of devils in Worms as numerous as chimneys upon the house tops. Only in our time has the devil faded out of human thought, the last remnant of the gross terrorism of an earlier faith. Think what it means that Giotto, six centuries ago, should have eliminated the devil from his thought; that to him should have been revealed so surely the great truth that "out of the heart are the issues of life." It is character that explains conduct, and it is human passions and the familiar daily human interests that account for the events which he portrays. Giotto was indeed the first of the moderns.

The Entrance into Jerusalem suggests farther resource. Jesus rides upon the ass's colt: the people wave palm branches and spread their garments in the way. So far all is familiar. But notice the figures climbing the palm trees to pluck the branches; more striking still, figures pulling their sweater-like garments off over their heads. There is nothing improbable about this. Plainly the branches must be plucked and the garments must be taken off, although these facts are not mentioned in the story. To Giotto they are valuable as not only enriching the story but, in particular, giving it vividness by the introduction of the unhackneyed incident.

A glaze rests upon the story so often repeated. Add inevitable incidents not thus glazed and the story has life again.

Notice again the Crucifixion, the swooning figure of the mother and the mourning friends, not very happily portrayed as regards this tragedy of feeling, for Giotto is but moderately a master of this phase of human expression. But notice the figures on the right. The centurion points toward the Christ with the words, "Verily this was a Son of God." The sober but not malevolent priest looks and listens attentively. In the foreground are the three soldiers disputing over the seamless garment. One draws his knife, evidently to divide it, his companion opposite interrupts him with a spirited protest and a gesture that unmistakably betrays his interest, while a third stands as umpire, both listening, and by a turn of his head, throwing his weight plainly on the side of the protestant. The striking thing about this group is the absolute certainty with which we can tell what each man is doing, almost what he is saying. No artist ever lived who was able to suggest thoughts quite beyond the limits of direct pictorial expression so forcefully and certainly as Giotto.

The Mourning over the Body of Christ is again a masterpiece despite certain obvious limitations, for here as elsewhere Giotto is unable to represent the tragic emotions in a subtle way. The grouping of the figures, however, the long diagonal line of the rocks, which seems to have acquired an unconscious symbolical meaning in the composition of Christian pictures, is excellent. But most striking of all is the treatment of the draperies. They fall, straight and heavy, as though they had lead in their hems. No breeze ruffles the stagnant air. Just imagine for a moment that these draperies were of the Botticelli sort, light and tossed by the wind. It is impossible to associate with them that deep grief which here is so evident. It is uncertain whether Giotto had any theories upon this point; like a true artist,

he had intuitions which were more reliable. But that there is an analogy that is fairly constant in the human mind, between certain things spiritual and things material cannot be doubted. Our language is full of it. Heaviness is a synonym for sorrow, and in adjective and noun is continually drawn upon for spiritual purposes. "Their hearts were heavy within them," and "They were sore (heavy) afraid." Few will recognize the means that Giotto has used for this effect, but none will fail to recognize the effect. Here as elsewhere our artist's instinct is unerring.

It may be worth while before we leave the Paduan Chapel to notice Giotto's later symbolism. The series of small panels are decorated with figures representing the Virtues and the Vices. They are of unequal suggestiveness, but strikingly significant. Hope, with its upward movement, as characterized by attitude and draperies, is simple but to the point. Envy (Invidia) (B 70) is the masterpiece of them all. Here is a figure of a woman the ugliest imaginable. A serpent issues from her mouth, but with strange perversity turns and bites her in the face. A horn, suggestive of aggressive power, here turns and grows back into her head. The ear, enormously large, suggests that she hears altogether too much. The hands, one clutching a bag, suggestive of greed and selfishness (for envy is the most selfish of vices), and the other with claw-like fingers uncanny in its suggestion. And, finally, the figure stands in the midst of flames, — in hot water, as we should say, — for Envy is a characteristic most troublesome to its possessor. All this is fanciful, a thing for which nature gives no counterpart, but as contrasted with the Vow of Obedience, it has the great advantage that everything is self-interpreting. The novice could guess, if not the name, at least the spirit of the figure that is here represented.

It was the good fortune of Florence that the much-wandering artist should return in his prime to leave in grand old Santa Croce the ripest example of his art. In the Bardi and

B 70, Envy. Chapel of the Arena, Padua.
Giotto, 1266?–1336.

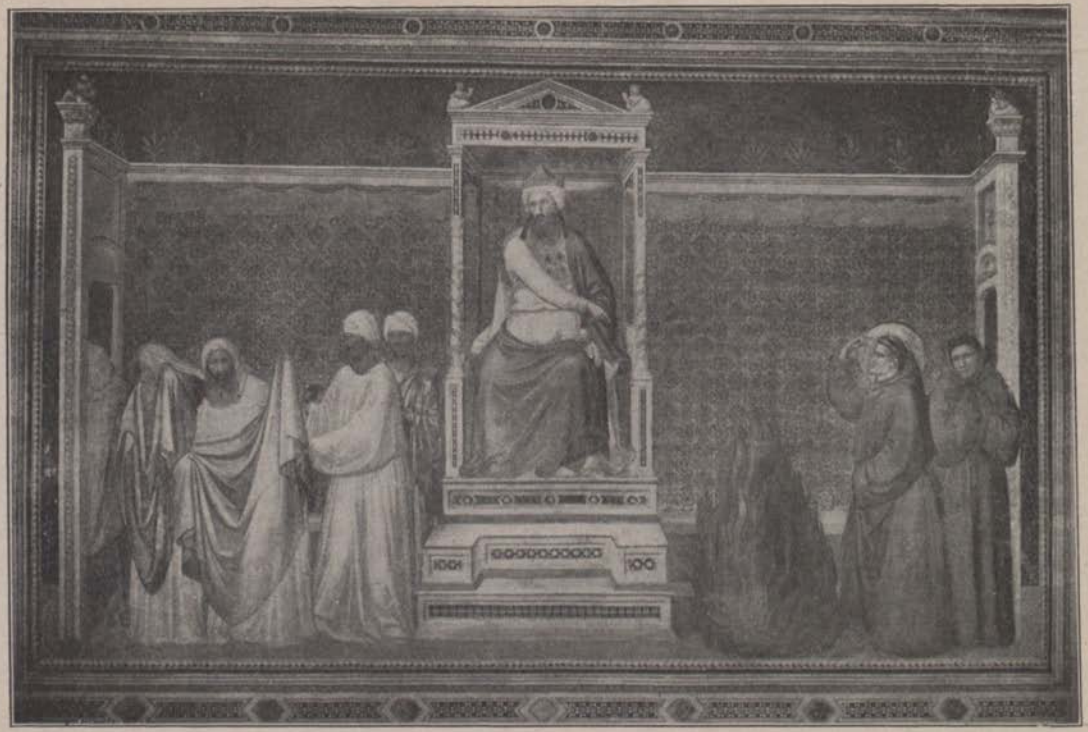
Peruzzi Chapels, commemorative of the mighty families who preceded the Medici and were wrecked by the earlier vicissitudes of banking, Giotto has given us the Story of Saint Francis and the Story of Saint John. No detailed study of these various scenes is possible here. Let us rather note the new elements that Giotto has called to his aid. The splendid composition of such a picture as the Death of Saint Francis, orderly yet free, has been admired in all ages, and was imitated to the point of absolute plagiarism by so facile a painter as Ghirlandajo in the near by church of Santa Trinità. Or, again, let us look at the Resurrection and Assumption of Saint John (B 75), so like what we have seen before, yet so much fuller in resource. The open grave in the left foreground, dark, and therefore not appealing to the eye, Giotto feels will pass unnoticed, and thus a part of the picture be lost. Hence a figure near by leans forward and peers into the grave. Psychic suggestion serves its purpose, and we notice inevitably the grave into which he is gazing. Other figures gaze upon the scene, one even shielding his eyes from the blazing rays of light, while another falls in absolute collapse, overcome by the startling apparition. Not only do we look where these bystanders look, impelled by suggestion, but we feel in a measure the excitement that overwhelms their fallen companion. He thus intensifies the impression which, necessarily weak in painting as compared with life itself, gains immense force from this suggestion.

The earthly scene takes place underneath the familiar canopy, through an opening in which passes the ascending figure to a little second story, small and flimsy. Here again we need help where once all was familiar. This is the device of the mediæval theatre, whose two or three storied stage represented earth and heaven, sometimes more. The ascending figure, met by the descending Christ and companions gone before, might possibly leave a doubt as to the ultimate destination of the group. Not so with this familiar

B 75, The Ascension of St. John the Evangelist. Peruzzi Chapel, S. Croce, Florence. Giotto, 1266?–1336.

device. The upper story is unmistakably heaven. It is difficult to be perfectly sure of Giotto's detail in a work so carefully restored as is this painting, which has been but recently recovered from the concealing whitewash, but if this is anywise true of Giotto, he learned in his later days to represent the Christ with a beauty undreamed of before and seldom equaled since.

Most significant and masterly of all is the Trial by Fire (B 72) in which Saint Francis appears before the Sultan and challenges the Moslem faith to the test of fire. He will walk through the flames if a representative of the other faith will do the same. It is a familiar statement with regard to the art of this earlier time that it is objective, that we see the outward acts but that little attention is given to the minuter portrayal of the passions which accompanied and engendered those acts. Giotto's art is not dramatic but anecdotal. The essence of the dramatic is the portrayal of situations and events in terms of the passions which are their explanation. This subjectivity in art we usually assign to Masaccio and, in fuller measure, to Leonardo. But notice these figures in Giotto's ripest work. Saint Francis stands before the blazing fire invoking the ordeal with unmistakable confidence, while his companion, loyal, but of different nerve, shrinks with obvious cringing from a test that staggers his faith. The Sultan plainly accepts the ordeal and points the Muftis standing by, toward the fire. They are clearly otherwise minded. One is just disappearing through the open door; another is making his way as rapidly as possible toward it, while the third and last, also minded to escape, is laid hold of by the attendant, with obvious expostulation. Notice the expression upon his face. In it we can read the conflicting emotions of anger and fear. He protests against the whole affair with arguments born of the emergency, while mingled with his terror is unconcealed anger at the arresting hand of the attendant. Action and attitude are expressive,



B 72, St. Francis before the Sultan. Bardi Chapel, S. Croce, Florence.
Giotto, 1266?–1336.

but so is countenance as well. We must wait a century and more to find another picture in which emotion reveals itself so significantly. Giotto at the last anticipates the centuries that are to come. He is the prophecy of the Renaissance, and at the best, almost its fulfillment.

As we pass briefly in review these varied scenes from the great book of life which Giotto knew so well, let us forget, if possible, their limitations, the imperfect drawing, the inadequate portrayal of the deeper passions, the shallow and faulty perspective, the meager and symbolistic setting. These things will pass, even with the plodding toil of little men. Let us rather see how utterly the mediæval formalism, the life-repressing symmetries of the earlier art have been forgotten. Art is now servant unto life, and it is but a question of time when she shall enter into the fulness of that liberty wherewith Giotto made her free.

CHAPTER V

THE LARGER VISION

ART paid its respects to Giotto by a century of imitation. It was a busy century, and the many votaries of art differed as much in temperament as at any time, but at first sight all these differences seem subordinated to a general sameness, which, once examined, proves to be only a resemblance to Giotto, a resemblance in color, in conception, in manner, in everything but genius. Some of these Giotteschi, as these followers of Giotto are called, are his very opposite in temperament, as we shall see in a later chapter, but they scarcely realize it in their attempt to emulate his splendid success. Others had no pronounced temperament of their own, but followed slavishly, missing the point from mere lack of insight. Such men are Taddeo Gaddi and Giottino, or "lesser Giotto," as we may perhaps translate the nickname. It is instructive to compare Giottino's Crucifixion with that of Giotto. Everybody lines up on the front of the stage and looks, not at the Christ, but at the audience, which the second rate painter can never forget. The action loses all sincerity, all cleverness, all dramatic power. The same holds of Taddeo Gaddi's Presentation of the Virgin, as compared with Giotto's treatment of the same theme. The Temple is more ambitious, the setting more ample, but the action is subordinated, hollow and insincere. But obvious as are these differences, yet a distant glimpse of almost any wall painted in the fourteenth century, and the bright color, the freer grouping, and the livelier incident remind us of Giotto. It was a Giotto century.

But like all things else, the Giotto century came to an end. If we gaze upon some wall painted in the last years of this century, it no longer closely resembles the work of Giotto. The colors are changed, not without loss, if we compare them with the exquisite harmonies in pink and blue which greet us as we gaze upon the Giotto chapels of Santa Croce from some point far down the nave. They are soberer now, which of course means duller and less pleasing to the distant view, but perhaps they are more like the color of the real people and things about them. The pictures, too, are deeper than Giotto's, and give us a feeling that the characters and incidents have much more room at their disposal, which reminds us that Giotto's pictures seldom seem to be more than a couple of yards deep, so that in comparison with the later pictures they appear almost like flat decorations. Finally, these later painters aspire to greater realism in the way of accessories. Never would they be content with a mere hint at a temple, like that in Giotto's Presentation of the Virgin, or with such symbols of mountains as those in his Flight into Egypt. Real buildings, real mountains, and real trees are a part of their program. All these changes may be summed up in one word, realism. All beings and objects that are represented must have their real character and be seen in their proper relations, a perfectly logical extension of Giotto's program, but one whose value to art was perhaps too hastily assumed. This larger program required a larger stage for its enactment. The room of all outdoors was necessary for a program which embraced all nature. As we approach the end of the Giotto century, therefore, we find the painters struggling with the problems of perspective and endeavoring to deepen their picture. We find them also abandoning the bright color which Giotto had made such a delight, and painting in duller hues, for nature's colors are not bright, for the most part, and he who would reproduce her faithfully must content himself with soberer colors.

The aims and attainments of art toward the year 1400 may best be studied in the works of Masolino, or Thomas the Less, as we may perhaps translate the name. We have in fact to do with a man of small caliber who registers rather the level of the current on which he is borne along than the independent level of personal genius. We find his work in Rome, in a little town of Northern Italy, and in the Brancacci Chapel of the Carmine in Florence, a chapel later to be exalted by the genius of another Thomas to the level of Giotto's chapel in Padua and Michelangelo's chapel in Rome. The Feast of Herod (B 130) and the Raising of Tabitha are typical both of the painter and of the time. Their striking characteristic is perspective, which is sometimes more ambitious than purposeful. City streets and buildings of various sorts are introduced, seemingly for no other purpose than to suggest space, the need of which is not always urgent. Contrasting these paintings with the work of Giotto, who never represented unnecessary space any more than he did unnecessary figures, we see clearly what the artists of the time were interested in.

If now we inquire by what means Masolino gives the impression of distance or space, we discover that the science of perspective was curiously one sided. Our impression of distance in nature comes from two sources. The first is the convergence of the lines of vision. When we look down a railroad track, the rails seem to converge, and we judge of distance by the amount of this convergence. The same principle applies when we see objects of fairly known size at varying distances. A man at a distance of a hundred yards makes a much smaller image upon our retina than one at a distance of ten yards, and we can measure the relative distance of the one and the other by taking account of this difference. Conversely, in painting a picture, where all objects, near and remote, must be represented upon a single canvas, the nearer figures must be represented larger and the

B 130, The Feast of Herod. Baptistery, Castiglione d' Olona.
Masolino, 1383–1447.

remoter figures smaller, if they are to make their proper impression upon the eye. The art of so representing them is the art of linear perspective.

But distance affects our vision in other ways which under certain circumstances become more important. Thus, a man at a distance of ten yards is seen not only on a larger scale but more distinctly. We could distinguish the cut of his coat, perhaps even the kind of buttons upon it. At a distance of a hundred yards we could descry no buttons at all, and all other details would be blurred and indistinct. This is due, not merely to their minuteness, but to the obscuring effect of the atmosphere which is not altogether transparent. Indistinctness is therefore another suggestion and measure of distance, usually quite in harmony with that of size or convergence, but in some cases almost our sole reliance, as in distant landscapes, where, not knowing anything about the size of the various hills, we judge of their distance almost solely by the atmospheric haze, which not only obscures detail but covers all with a mantle of blue which is the atmosphere's own color. The representation of this opacity and color of the atmosphere as modifying the appearance of all objects seen through it, is the art of aerial or atmospheric perspective.

It will be apparent at a glance that both these are necessary to the correct representation of nature, but that their relative importance varies greatly according to the distance represented. The blurring effect of distance is noticeable even in the range of an ordinary room, for you can see the pattern of the wall paper on the wall near you, much more distinctly than on the wall opposite, but the familiar size of all the objects, the regular lines of floor and ceiling, and so forth, cause us to rely much more upon linear perspective in such cases. On the other hand, for distant landscape effects, while a certain gradation in size is indispensable, we do in fact rely primarily upon atmospheric haze and color for our impression of dis-

tance, and atmospheric perspective becomes relatively important.

It has already been noted that Giotto's pictures do not attempt to represent a depth of more than a yard or two. In such a space atmospheric perspective had no appreciable importance. As a matter of fact, Giotto seems never to have thought of such a thing. Usually we do not miss it, but in exceptional cases like the Flight into Egypt, the lack of it is grotesquely apparent in the mountains which dwindle into insignificant symbols within arm's reach instead of looming large in a distant background, as they should do. But barring a few rare exceptions of this sort it is hardly an exaggeration to say that linear perspective is all that Giotto needs.

It will be at once apparent, however, that with the more ambitious program which we are now considering, atmospheric perspective becomes important. Masolino is obviously embarrassed to make his greater spaces seem natural, especially when he has landscape backgrounds, but he never guesses the true remedy. This is curiously illustrated in his Feast of Herod, where, in accord with the practice of the early Renaissance, he wishes to represent the burial of the martyred Baptist in the remote background, and so requires a background of far reaching mountain landscape. His mountain, however, refuses to stay in the background where it belongs, not being properly dimmed and blued, and so, to restrain its intrusiveness he paints in front of it a long receding arcade whose converging lines and diminishing arches speak to us convincingly of the distance which our sharply detailed mountain seeks in vain to deny. Nothing could better illustrate at once our artist's weakness and his consciousness of it. In this Masolino is representative of his time. Art knew nothing of atmospheric perspective.

And, broadly speaking, this remained the limitation of Italian art. It mastered the subtleties of linear perspective as they had never been mastered before and have never been

surpassed since. But even a Ghirlandajo, heir of all the ages and living in the fulness of time, could build a long, meaningless wall running back into his landscape to show by its converging lines how deep the picture was, while Perugino and the great Raphael would pave acres of open space with square blocks of marble to give them a chance at the indispensable linear perspective. It is due to this same lack that we have the perpendicular landscapes of Benozzo Gozzoli, and Michelangelo's stout assertion that landscapes had no place in art. It is due to this same limitation that the Italian art remained from first to last a study of the human figure, and the infinite possibilities of appeal to both sense and spirit, through the interpretation of nature in terms of color and light, remained closed to the Italian painters. They were unable to follow into this larger world the one man who for a brief moment opened wide the door.

That man was Masaccio. Like Masolino, he was christened Tommaso or Thomas. This was shortened to Maso, and in turn lengthened to Masaccio by the addition of a descriptive and not very complimentary ending. "Great hulking Tom," Browning calls him, illustrating by this awkward means the ineptitude of our English tongue for those finer shadings of thought for which the Italian is famous. Born in 1402, his work in the Brancacci Chapel seems to have terminated in 1428, when at the early age of twenty-six his fame called him to Rome. He is never again heard of. The works in Rome attributed to him are unquestionably by another hand, and we may safely assume that he never reached that city. Somewhere, perhaps in the delirium of fever, in a wayside cottage, or stricken by a robber's hand, big Tom's luminous spirit went out in darkness, leaving men to wonder what it was that had made it so bright. Even farther an unkind fate pursued him, for the church in which he had begun his work never to be completed, was later destroyed by fire, and the Chapel was preserved not without

serious defacement of his painting. It is through a veil which has darkened with the years that we gaze upon the larger vision of Masaccio.

The frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel are not the only works attributed to Masaccio, but they are so far the most important that the rest may be ignored. The most prominent is the Tribute Money (B 140), a masterly work admiringly studied and imitated by Raphael a century later. As a composition it seems at first not unlike Giotto's, though a second glance will disclose in it the clear beginning of that complex composition in two dimensions of which Giotto knew nothing, and which Raphael was later to make his chief claim to fame. This is not the place, however, to penetrate into so recondite a subject. We will simply remember it as one more of those remarkable anticipations of later achievement of which so many are to be placed to his credit. It is sufficient to note the splendid group of men among whom the Master is so easily first, not by attribute or outward sign, but by inner character. We have here the second really significant study of the Christ, and Italian art has but one more in store for us.

The story is familiar. Peter comes to Jesus and tells him that the tax-gatherer has demanded payment of the poll tax and asks for instructions. Jesus, after taking advantage of the incident as usual, for his higher purpose, tells Peter to catch a fish, and he will find a coin in its mouth which he may give to the tax-gatherer for them both. In the center we see the central incident, including the instructions to Peter, which the latter follows by the motion of his hand. In the left background we see Peter catching the fish, and in the right foreground again, he is giving the coin to the tax-gatherer. Thus far nothing is remarkable, save general excellence, the dignity and naturalness of the figures which far surpass Giotto's, and the fairly clear narration, in which, however, Giotto may claim superiority. In some particulars Masaccio

B 140, The Tribute Money. Brancacci Chapel, Carmine, Florence. Masaccio, 1401?–1428?

at first seems to have fallen below his great predecessor, for in this picture he gives us three Peters and two tax-gatherers, a thing which the logical Giotto, with all his story-telling necessities, had refused to do. But Masaccio's is a larger logic. He seems to realize that merely as a picture, three Peters are just as serviceable as Peter, James and John, while as a story, involving successive incidents, we are compelled to take the picture part by part, and so these simultaneous Peters really become successive Peters, and disturb us no more than do the successive mental pictures which are evoked in verbal story-telling by the repetition of the name. There is something to Giotto's objection, but the true conclusion to be drawn from it is that painting should cease to tell stories altogether, and this is the conclusion that the painters always come to in the end. But if we must have stories, Masaccio was right in returning to the early practice which Giotto had abandoned, but which was now to endure down to the end of story-telling in Italian painting. We even find this repetition in Michelangelo's great ceiling.

It is not till we turn from the figures and the story to the setting, that we discover the first of Masaccio's great discoveries, atmospheric perspective. These hills and mountains, half defaced by time and the great conflagration, nevertheless unmistakably loom large and distant, as they should, upon the horizon. Such things are so commonplace in our day, so utterly a matter of course with us, and the bias of our partial observation is so overwhelmingly in favor of persons rather than inanimate things, that it is almost impossible to give due credit to an achievement which is not only indispensable to the larger purposes of art, but which is the more difficult because of this very bias. Like ourselves, the artist is apt to be more interested in the human than in anything else. Thus, Ghirlandajo is a minute observer of the human figure, but he paints an ox so that save for the horns you might mistake it for a horse. For such subtleties as atmos-

pheric haze and color he had no appreciation whatever. The bias of his patrons of course tended to confirm his own. How much more all this in the case of Masaccio. Yet he, without a shadow of precedent, and without the encouragement of the slightest answering appreciation, sees earth and sky in their true mystery, and measures them with the measuring rod by which God has laid off the span of the heavens.

This, however, is only a beginning. In nothing had the deepening interest of the painters been more apparent than in the human figure, and of late, in the nude figure, influenced, no doubt, by the reviving study of the ancient sculpture. To this difficult problem Giotto had made no contribution. He represents the nude only when he must, as in the Crucifixion, and then but partially and feebly. Masolino, however, is more ambitious, as witness the Temptation (B 135), a subject deliberately chosen, it would seem, because it gave an opportunity to represent the nude, for it has no connection with the other subjects which he treats. His drawing is fairly correct as regards proportions, shapes, and so forth, but it will be a susceptible spirit that is inspired by Masolino's picture. Two more inexpressive figures it would be difficult to imagine. There is no suggestion of action or life or of the inner structure which these imply.

This leads us to the reflection that drawing, modeling, and all kindred forms of expression may be correct without being good. Correct drawing is drawing which accurately represents proportion and shape. Good drawing, expressive drawing, drawing that vividly suggests life, action and passion, is not always secured by correct proportion and shape. It may even be secured without it. We may perhaps add that mere correctness is in itself but remotely related to the art faculty. It is largely a matter of drill and practice, and belongs rather to the science of art than to art itself. But

B 135, Adam and Eve in Eden.
Brancacci Chapel, Carmine, Florence.
Masolino, 1383–1447.

expressive drawing, that is, the expression of action, passion and true meaning, through drawing, is something which lies much closer to the inspired imagination, which is the true source of art. No artist is fully equipped for his work who has not learned to draw correctly, and the teacher of drawing whose function it is to thus equip him, soon comes to regard this accomplishment as all important, even the very essence of art itself. But drawing is related to art in much the same way that rhetoric is to literature. There have been great writers who have used mixed figures and violated other wholesome laws of the art, as there have been others who have been faultless in these matters without winning fame or recognition. There is an observable tendency on the part of great artists to show a certain contempt for mere accuracy. We observe inaccurate drawing not merely in Giotto, whose skill was undoubtedly insufficient, but even in passed masters of the art like Botticelli and Michelangelo himself, whose deviations from nature are certainly intentional, and obey only the higher law of his own imagination. This higher law is the stumbling block of the art hack and the studio pedagogue who see in these deviations from nature's commonplaces only a thing to censure, as also of the careless student who seeks in them a warrant for his own lawlessness and undisciplined caprice.

Masolino's drawing is measurably accurate, but inexpressive and worthless as art. If we turn now to Masaccio's Expulsion from Eden (B 139), we have an illustration of that other excellence which we have been considering. The figures of Adam and Eve are not altogether accurate. The veriest novice will notice the crooked leg of Adam. He may even, in complacency over his discovery, be quite superior to further investigation. But despite these inaccuracies, plainly mere inadvertence on the part of a mind absorbed in higher things, these figures are the first example of great drawing in Christian art. They pulse with life and throb with passionate

B 139, Expulsion from Eden. Brancacci Chapel, Carmine, Florence. Masaccio, 1401?–1428?

action. In the impetuosity of his inspired feeling the artist has drawn a careless line or two, but the great drama is portrayed with startling intensity and truth. Notice the amazing suggestiveness of the Adam who hides his face in his hands, to suggest a grief which no art can express. Notice finally the angel, supreme among the angelic throng with which the art of Italy has enriched the imagination of the world. Underneath the inexorableness which speaks of the divine decrees there is the divine compassion which rescues tragedy from despair.

Closely akin to this new eloquence with which Masaccio endued the human figure is the third characteristic which glorifies his art. Up to this time we have seen that art, even in the hands of so great an artist as Giotto, is essentially objective. If a story is told, we see the act and the actors, but we are left to infer their feelings save in rare instances and to a slight degree. This means that we see the outside of the story, and the conflict of passions within, which are its essence, we are left to infer. Such art is anecdotal rather than dramatic. The essence of the dramatic is the interpretation of incident in terms of the feelings which cause it and which are caused by it. This is infinitely deeper and truer than any outside interpretation can ever be, but it is correspondingly more difficult both to see and to express. Whether it is well for painting to venture into this subjective field is a much mooted question. Probably the subjective is more appropriate to Browning's art than to that of Masaccio, but the Renaissance was less clear in its perception of the limits of the several arts, than it was rich in art impulse. In any case, this delving into the thoughts and intents of the heart was very much in line with the avowed program of the Renaissance, which was to know and reveal the uttermost truth about man.

It will be apparent at a glance that the Expulsion from Eden is much more a representation of passion than of action.

The whole emphasis has shifted, and we instinctively think of the passion as the principal thing.

Another striking example is found in a third picture by Masaccio in this same chapel, St. Peter baptizing the Pagans (B 144). The theme is hackneyed, and Peter has no peculiar excellence beyond that noted earlier. Our attention is not greatly arrested by the youth standing in the water, upon whose head the water of baptism is poured. But behind stands another youth, naked and waiting his turn. As he waits, he folds his arms and cowers in an unmistakable shiver, suggestive alike of cold and of nervous excitement. As a part of the action this is nothing; as a revelation of feeling it is supremely expressive. Instantly we feel that these figures are not dummies *to* whom things happen from without, but they are human beings like ourselves in whose inner spirit is enacted the drama of life.

It is interesting to speculate as to what Florentine art might have become if this marvellous youth, instead of dying at the very threshold of opportunity had lived like Michelangelo through three generations of art activity. That he would have profoundly modified its development cannot for a moment be doubted, but just how or how far, it is difficult to estimate. That he would have anticipated the dramatic style and the wonderful subjective analysis of Leonardo by half a century is all but certain. But that he would have opened the eyes of artists to the marvellous beauty of the Tuscan landscape, perhaps even discovering its paramount importance in painting, a service which Leonardo and Michelangelo were quite unable to perform, is not among the impossibilities. If so, he would have changed the destiny of art. As it is, he stands midway between Giotto and Michelangelo, these two allotted long years for their task, but he, dropping the pen he had but taken, and leaving it to feebler hands to write Italy's message in the great book, before Michelangelo should write "Finis" upon the pages.

B 144, St. Peter Baptizing the Pagans. Brancacci Chapel, Carmine, Florence. Masaccio, 1401?–1428?

CHAPTER VI

THE PROTEST OF FAITH

FROM Cimabue to Masaccio we have traced the evolution of art consistently toward its chosen goal of realism. We have seen its abandonment of mosaic, its surrender of gold and decorative pattern, its relinquishment of symmetry and even of bright color, all in the interest of naturalness. In that same interest, we have seen the freer composition, the deepening perspective, the more realistic drawing, the importation of relevant but novel incident, and finally the delving into the inner sanctuary of life and the exposure of its innermost secrets. The movement was all one way. We have noted no exception, no protest.

But there was both exception and protest. We find them in Florence, where modernism is overwhelmingly in the ascendant. We find them much more in Siena where semi-annihilation by the great plague of 1348 and hopeless subordination to Florence, strengthened a naturally conservative tendency. During the period of Florentine prosperity, Sienese artists frequently found employment in Florence, and Florentine artists were not wanting whose ideals were congenial to the Sienese if not directly influenced by them. Throughout the Giotto century, however, there seems to have been no conscious conflict of principle between the two schools. There were differences, it was clear, but they seemed matters of taste rather than of principle. Thus, the Sienese usually painted in dark and warm tones, while the Florentines, even those who were in sympathy with Siena, preferred the light and cheerful tones of Giotto. But

neither color scheme did or could plead nature as its warrant, and so with other differences, whatever they might be. We shall hardly understand the double mind of this period unless we think of it as unconscious of its own contradictions. Much of this seeming unity was doubtless due to the genial greatness of Giotto, whose leadership was so congenial that even those most opposed to him in temperament and principle seem to have thought of themselves as loyal followers. The opposition of purpose, however, was not the less real.

Florence fortunately furnishes us perfect examples of the conservative art of the Giotto century, both of the Sienese and the Florentine sort. Both are contained within the precincts of that wonderful old church, Santa Maria Novella, where we have already found the Rucellai Madonna. For the masterpiece of the Sienese, we must pass through the side door into the great cloister and enter the old Chapter House, later known as the Spanish Chapel. It is covered with Sienese paintings of differing merit, of which we will take the two great side walls as being best and most significant. The wall on the left represents the glorification of Saint Thomas Aquinas (B 105), the great Dominican theologian. High in the arched top of the great wall sits the saint in an imposing chair, while on either side, in a straight row, sit the worthies of the church, among whom Moses is recognized by his flame-like horns. Above these worthies, symmetrically grouped, are the seven cardinal virtues in the form of angels, while beneath the feet of the saint sit the three arch-heretics, Arius, Sabellius and Averrhoes, whom Saint Thomas was supposed to have confounded by his reasoning. Lower down, in a long row across the great wall, in splendid Gothic chairs or stalls, sit female figures representing the arts and sciences of the day, while below them sit male figures, historical or legendary characters, who are supposed to have distinguished themselves in the art or science in question. The identity is established through more or less recognizable attributes or

B 105, The Triumph of St. Thomas Aquinas. Spanish Chapel, S. Maria Novella, Florence. Fourteenth Century.

symbols, music by the little organ, architecture by the square, and so forth. Besides these more obvious symbols, the wall is packed with lesser symbols, especially in the medallion decorations of the chairs, symbols largely taken from Dante, the interpretation of which belongs to literature rather than to art.

The dominant characteristic of this art is instantly apparent. It is decorative. Everywhere is symmetry, and nowhere is action or life. In the drawing of the figures the artist has unquestionably been influenced by the modern art. Their attitudes, too, are more varied than in the great mosaics, and show a certain amount of spontaneity. But this touch of modernism is neither profound nor significant. The principle on which the whole composition is based is that of symmetry and decorative arrangement. The painting is, in so far, wholly mediæval in spirit. As a decoration it is magnificent. The dignified worthies above, the graceful winged virtues, the fair female forms below, above all, the splendid band of Gothic stalls, make a wall which some have called the most beautiful in Italy.

Next to this decorative tendency, we must note the redundant symbolism. This, too, we recall as a mediæval characteristic. It would be difficult, however, to find a Florentine work of any period so packed with symbolism as this. We shall notice this more plainly if we turn to the opposite wall, the Church Militant (B 107). The church, of course, is symbolized by a church building in which we easily recognize the great cathedral, then building. Alongside stands an imposing group in which we recognize the Pope and the Emperor with crozier and sword, theoretical joint rulers over the lives and consciences of men. Other figures are alleged by tradition, let us hope erroneously, to be portraits of contemporary painters. The day when complacent egotism was to undermine the sincerity of religious art, was, for the most part, still remote. In front of these figures is a little platform on which rest a

B 107, The Church Militant and Triumphant. Spanish Chapel, S. Maria Novella, Florence. Fourteenth Century.

couple of unplausible sheep, guarded by two spotted dogs, black and white, while other similar dogs are making short shrift of some grey wolves near by. This, we are told, represents an old pun at first leveled against the Dominicans but afterward taken by them in good part. Their name, in Latin, Dominicanes, if cut in two, makes two Latin words, Domini-Canes, Dogs of the Lord. As the order was formed to suppress heresy, they were quick to retort that they were indeed the dogs set to guard the Lord's sheep from the heretics, the wolves. Their black and white garments suggest the spotted dog which we see in the picture. Going farther, we see the great Dominican arguing with heretics who are plainly confounded by his citations from Holy Writ, while farther still, another is preaching to the people who show a gratifying enthusiasm. Our pathway now turns back upon itself and meanders upward across the wall to a point where St. Dominic of colossal size points out to a crowd of tiny folk the way to the gate of Heaven where St. Peter stands with his keys. St. Peter again is a colossus, but as these tiny folk pass through the gate, they suddenly become as large as Peter.

It is unnecessary to pursue farther this puzzle which may amuse the curious. It is sufficient to note that this symbolism is as arbitrary as it is voluminous, and that in this case all symmetry and other decorative quality is sacrificed to it. This extravagant use of symbolism, appealing to the mind rather than to the feeling, and subordinating all other characteristics, we may call the didactic in art. It is perhaps the feeblest of all æsthetic elements. It continually recurs in later art in the form of allegory, which, however, slowly emancipates itself from symbolism, that is, from the arbitrary meaning which is peculiarly its own, and remains merely as a graceful and meaningless figure study. Such are Raphael's Prudence, Force and Moderation (C 169), allegorical now only in name, without a sign of an attribute or of character resem-

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blance, but a mere study in beautiful figures and graceful composition.

Judging by these two examples, — and they are fairly representative, — Sienese art during this Giotto century was essentially mediæval art, with its well known tendency to symmetry and decoration, and with an exaggerated and essentially local tendency to symbolism. It knows nothing of the new ideals and the larger program. It is but superficially modern.

Different and yet similar is the splendid wall of the Strozzi Chapel in this same old church, to which we now return. Here is Orcagna's Paradise (B 83), the creation of one of the most gifted of Giotto's contemporaries, and the highest representative of the art of the old school. High in the center of the arch-topped wall sit the Christ and the Madonna, while on either side in serried ranks from top to bottom are the glorified spirits whose beauty is the only and the sufficient furnishing of Paradise.

> "Where loyal hearts and true stand ever in the light,
> All rapture through and through in God's most holy sight."

These figures are not like those of a later time, but they are certainly not less beautiful. It may be doubted whether any other picture in Italian art offers so many beautiful faces. The artist, too, has quite succeeded in giving them the modern and lifelike touch which allies the work to the art of Giotto. Yet in their straightness, their perfectly formal arrangement, their absolute symmetry and their lack of all trace of perspective, they vie with the mosaics themselves in their loyalty to the old tradition. We may describe the whole as a painting in mosaic style, done in Giotto colors, by an artist of singular delicacy and taste.

Why did Orcagna choose to paint in this style? The first suggestion is that he did not know the new perspective style, but this is quickly dispelled by a glance at the center fore-

B 83, Paradise. Strozzi Chapel, S. Maria Novella, Florence.
Andrea Orcagna, 1308–1368.

ground, where are represented in smaller scale a large number of figures in unmistakable perspective. The next suggestion is that he preferred the formal and flat style to the freer and pictorial manner of Giotto because of its decorative superiority. There is much reason to believe that Orcagna did prefer it for this reason, but we are a little puzzled that he should not have held to this style throughout. There is a marked distinction between this group in the lower center, which is not only in perspective, but is free and irregular in arrangement, and the great decorative ranks on either side. The reason cannot be merely one of decoration, for the center of the wall does not differ from the sides in this respect. The reason must rather be sought in the subject. Here the difference is clear. The central group below represents earth and life upon it. Here naturalness, perspective and realism seem to the artist appropriate. The rest of the picture represents Paradise, and here he reverts to the old manner. The motive which lies back of this conservatism is not decoration, but religion. The choice is no accident. It rests upon a principle as old as history. In each period of Egyptian civilization we find the priests using for ceremonial purposes vessels and implements which had been in vogue for other purposes in the preceding epoch. The early picture writing, long discarded for practical purposes in favor of the easier cursive hand, was retained by the priests as hieroglyphs, — sacred letters. When the Jews had passed through the stone age and the bronze age and down into the iron age, they were still performing their religious ceremonies with stone knives, — sacred knives. When Phidias made his statue of Athena in a sincere effort to deepen and exalt the religious feeling of the Athenians, he draped the figure in an old-fashioned manner which was altogether obsolete except for religious purposes. Each recurring effort at religious revival in Greece was marked by a like revival of obsolete forms of art. This is the universal tendency of religion, a tendency closely identified with its

strength and its value to men. For religion is essentially a matter of feeling. There are reasons for this feeling, of course, but the feelings are not mere reasoning, and cannot be created by mere reasoning. Now it is characteristic of feelings, especially of those which are stable and serve the great purpose of steadying life, that they grow slowly and are very tenaciously attached to those objects or customs with which they have long been associated. There is nothing intrinsically sacred about stone knives, but there is something sacred about old knives as contrasted with new ones. The adoption of a new religion may operate powerfully to change the direction of art, for there is no such thing as destroying the old religion without breaking these long standing associations of art and custom. The real explanation of the rapid change which took place in art during the sixteenth century is to be found in the fact that for a time there was, in the triumph of humanism, something very like the adoption of a new religion, and men welcomed the changes in religion which might be effected by innovations in art. But where men have been sincerely desirous of maintaining existing religious sentiment, they have usually shown a marked reluctance to break with tradition in art, or in anything else with which religious sentiment has been historically associated.

It would therefore be contrary to all precedent if the innovations of Giotto and his followers did not find opposition on the part of the religious party. That this opposition was not at first violent or even conscious does not change its character. Orcagna cannot bring himself to represent the celestial forms in any but the time-honored manner, though he shows himself quite as much a master of the new method as Giotto himself. It is not that flat and symmetrical decorations represent Paradise more correctly. That is a thesis that he would hardly have defended. But devotion and reverence were wonted to these forms, and could not at once adjust themselves to new ones. What one of us would

care to see an archangel armed with a Mauser rifle? Yet save in the matter of age it is quite as appropriate as a mediæval sword.

But if the protest of faith was silent and half unconscious in the days of Giotto, it could not remain so as realism scored its dazzling triumphs.

As the new program became so overwhelmingly apparent in Masaccio's art, it was impossible for the older art any longer to be unconscious of its danger. Threatened with destruction, it asserted itself in passionate protest. Fortunately for it and for us, it is represented in the new century by one of the most gifted painters of any time. Easily misunderstood, frequently disparaged as old-fashioned and out of date, Fra Angelico is, after all, one of the rarest spirits that art has ever claimed for its own. A monk, he represented in very deed the characteristics that were so universal in theory and so rare in practice. It was an age that felt, perhaps even more than our own, the imperfections of human character and the inadequate conditions under which our life is lived. The chance that life would develop fair and pure under the conditions then prevailing, was so infinitesimal that it is not strange the belief should have gained credence that purity and holiness were not of this world, that only in isolation could one attain in some degree to that serenity, purity and peace which were the accepted characteristics of the life in the heavenly hereafter. Those who were farthest from the monastic life or the monastic character were as little disposed as any to question the monastic ideal. To escape from the world, its temptations and its disillusions, that was not practicable for all, for how should life continue if all men forsook the callings which alone could perpetuate it? But fortunate indeed were those to whom was given the privilege of living in pure contemplation, of seeing heavenly visions, and of acquiring, uninterrupted, an increasing measure of the heavenly character. Probably William the Con-

queror would have been as prompt to recognize the felicity of the monk, as he was to accept his own very different calling.

Rarely has a monk so perfectly exemplified the monastic theory as Fra Angelico. A gentle and loving spirit, he seems to have been not only free from, but strangely ignorant of, the harsher passions that are so large a part of human experience. If he was ever angry, it has left no trace; if he ever saw anger, it seems to have pained him too deeply to permit of understanding or careful observation. From all the discord and din of strife which sounds in our ears, he seems to have lived apart. As a painter, his touch is the most ineffable of any that we know. If it be true, as we are told, that he never began to paint without first kneeling and praying to be guided by the Holy Spirit, and that having thus prayed he thought it sacrilege to doubt that guidance, even to the extent of changing what he had once done, his work certainly goes far to bear out his own conviction of heavenly guidance. He is fond of miniature, tiny faces the size of one's finger nail, worked out with a perfection so complete that, magnified to natural size, they still show scarce a touch of imperfection. His feeling for color is as unerring as his handiwork. It is the bright color that speaks at once of mediæval art and of Giotto's transforming touch, but beyond this, Giotto counts for nothing in the art of Fra Angelico. The same lovely groupings with perfect symmetry, the same exquisite backgrounds of lustrous figured gold, the same naïve conception of heavenly scenes that characterized the middle ages, are familiar to us in the art of the wonderful monk. His ceaseless industry, furthered by the appreciative pressure of his Prior, resulted in a multitude of works in the preservation of which Fate has been exceptionally kind.

It will be interesting to begin our acquaintance with Fra Angelico by examining a picture that was painted not far from the time that Masaccio was painting in the Brancacci

Chapel. The two men were of very different age, Fra Angelico already passing his prime, and Masaccio still a youth, but this difference of age is not significant. There is little of development in Fra Angelico. The other was a youth, but the monk was always a youth, so the comparison is less inappropriate than it might seem.

At first sight this picture seems more nearly related to Cimabue than to Masaccio. There is the same formal presentation of the Madonna and Child (B 115), the same tip of the Madonna's head, the same curtained background, rich with gold, the splendid frame, but decorated with angels — which have acquired a factitious interest, and are the all too frequent representatives of the artist — all this is mediæval. In some respects it is far more so than Cimabue's work, notably in the representation of the Christ Child. Cimabue leaves something to be desired, but there is no question as to his purpose. It is to represent a natural child, a purpose which we can attribute to Fra Angelico only by assuming his total ignorance of the subject he was treating. Such ignorance is indeed often assumed. We are told that the good monk, living in his cloister, saw nothing of the world. The Christ Child is such as he imagines a child to be. Equally, the use of gold backgrounds was fatal to the larger realism of the time, which was based on perspective. These and other characteristics seem to indicate an unconsciousness of the mighty advance which art had made.

A glance at some of the details, however, makes it doubtful whether ignorance is the true explanation. It is interesting to compare closely this Madonna of the Linaiuoli with the Rucellai Madonna by Cimabue. They seem alike until we put them together. Then all is contrast. How different, for instance, are the draperies in the background. Cimabue, as we have seen, has nothing but a few, vaguely hinted folds that are carried right across the figures in the gold background, as though figures and folds had no relation to each

B 115, Madonna of the Linaiuoli. Uffizi, Florence.
Fra Angelico, 1387–1455.

other. Not so in Fra Angelico's work. The figures adjust themselves perfectly to the broken pattern of the folds. The shadows are used with masterly skill. In a word, the curtain is drawn from the actual, not from imagination. Now that is the very essence of the new art. The old art imagines things. If it copied anything it copied another painting. The new art studies actualities and copies nature with only such modifications as the limitations of the artist or his higher artistic purpose may require. If Fra Angelico studies actual curtains he is using the method of the new art. There are abundant reasons to believe that he was familiar with both the methods and ideals of that art. If his own art had different methods and ideals, it is his deliberate choice, not his helplessness.

How then can we account for such an impossible child as we have here? Neither proportion, expression, nor draperies, are in the remotest degree possible for a real child. It is essentially a doll, and a very artificial one at that. It is interesting to imagine a meeting between these two painters. The painter of the shivering youth might gaze upon the work of the good monk, and say with a smile, good-natured, doubtless, "My dear Frate, do you imagine that babies look like that? Have you never seen the children playing in the streets?" A poser, such a question might seem to be, too often accepted by those familiar only with the canons of our own art, as the sufficient condemnation of this artist whose gaze and whose affections turned back toward the age that was past. But let us not be too precipitate. Can we not imagine the quiet eye of the monk turned round upon his good-natured critic, with the reply, "My dear Masaccio, can you think of nothing better for art to do than to imitate the children that are playing in the streets? Wherein are we the richer if this commonplace of our experience is painfully duplicated in our art?" Nor is it easy to refute the argument. Are we, after all, largely remunerated for our

toil and pains by mere duplication of the commonplaces of nature?

Fra Angelico has quite another goal for art, one which the Christ Child may well illustrate. His purpose, like that of Orcagna, and this time much more pronouncedly and certainly, was religious. If he painted the Madonna, it was not that she might be radiantly beautiful. It was that she might aid in that great purpose which controlled his life and which he fain would make the purpose of all life. The Christ Child was to him sacred, must needs be so to those who viewed his art, must incite to devotion rather than to admiration, still less to mere wonder at the cleverness of the artist; and, in accordance with the principle with which we are already familiar, to be religious it must needs be old-fashioned, must needs suggest the forms long associated with sanctity and devotion. Hence the artist does not take as his starting point the child in the streets, which, whatever its significance to us, has never been suggestive of the heavenly powers nor the heavenly life. He goes rather to the church where a sacred image has so often prompted to devotion, and takes this sacred image, unconsciously modified by centuries of tradition until it but remotely suggests the human infant which was its origin. This image, fantastically dressed, oftentimes decorated with gems and revered as the possessor of occult powers, this must be the starting point for his art; the starting point, notice, for it is not the end and substance of Fra Angelico's art. Paris doll though the Bambino may be, it is a Paris doll transfigured. There is no return to naturalism. There is a transfiguring touch of celestial beauty, a suggestion of that heavenly life which it is the purpose of art to help men to attain. The first glance at Fra Angelico's pictures reminds us always of the middle ages. Closer observation will as invariably reveal to us a higher skill, a transfiguring, spiritualizing touch.

The principle already suggested in connection with the

Christ Child is everywhere apparent. The Madonna is much the same as tradition had known before, but sweeter, truer, lovelier, more heavenly if not more human. The backgrounds, the accessories, all are familiar, yet all are new.

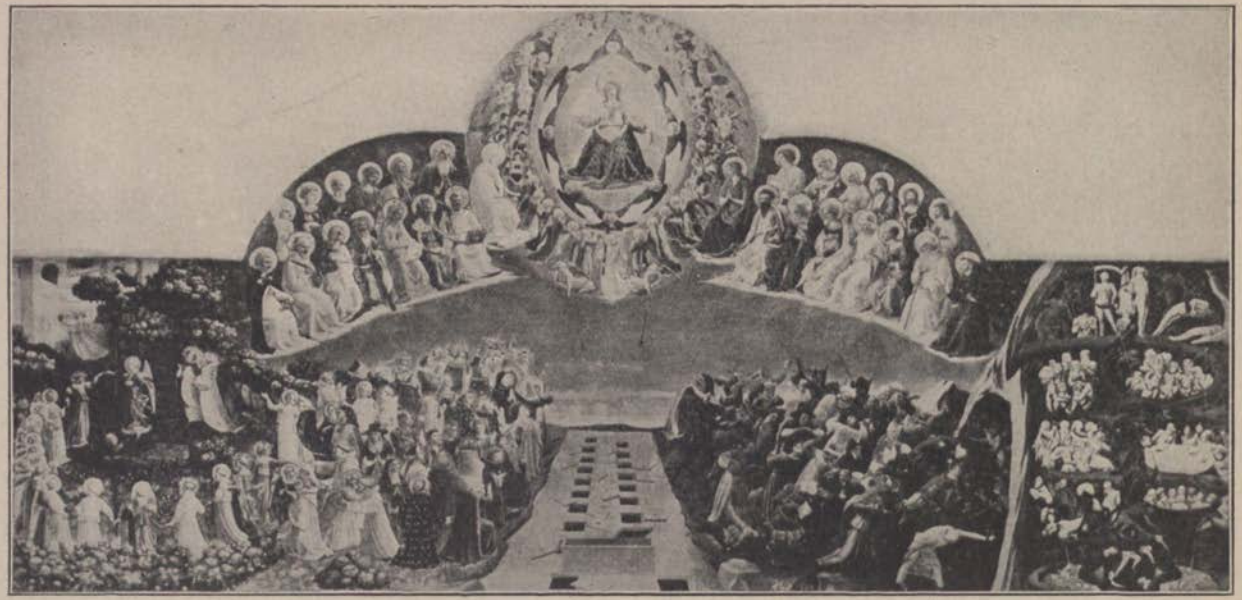
It is most important that we should emphasize this new or higher element in his art rather than its superficial resemblance to the old art whose tradition he unquestionably accepted. It is *the something more* that makes Fra Angelico the supreme artist. That something more is not in the line of Masaccio's development, not in the line of the progress of his time. It is for that reason so much the more to be attributed wholly to himself. Perhaps we shall best appreciate it if we notice the Meeting of Christ with the two Dominican Monks (B 119). It is useless to compare this figure of the Saviour with any other that Italian art can give us. It is worthy of comparison, but comparison is futile. All is contrast. Look upon it and ask yourself the familiar test questions. Is this the "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"? There is scarce a trace of grief, present or past, in this celestial countenance. Is this he who drove the money changers out of the temple? The thought is equally impossible. Nearer, perhaps, we shall come if we ask if this is he who blessed little children? And yet even here longer observation will leave us in doubt. No, without disparagement to this wonderful creation, there is scarce an incident in the life of Jesus that we can associate with it. And when we have applied our test in vain, it will perhaps occur to us that this is precisely what we should expect. The painter is not trying to give us the historic Christ. It is none of these incidents that he would recall to our mind. On the contrary, he would disclose to us in the Christ as in the Madonna, in the angels, in that marvellous series of heavenly personalities which gaze at us so serenely from his pictures, early and late, — he would reveal to us in all these, not the earthly, but the heavenly life. It is no part of his purpose, no part of his

B 119, Dominican Monks meeting Christ. Cloister, S. Marco, Florence.
Fra Angelico, 1387–1455.

ideal, that life should develop what we commonly call character — that adaptation to the earthly surroundings, that calmness and poise that fit us for mastery in the great human struggle. Of all that struggle he knows and will know nothing. He will rather reveal to us the beauty of the heavenly life, make us long to attain it, and through that longing adapt ourselves in some measure to it before it is as yet our portion.

Most significant of all his pictures we must account the Last Judgment (B 116), strangest of themes for this interpreter of the soul's ecstasy. In the perfectly symmetrical composition of this somewhat complicated picture, we have first of all the Christ, sitting high in the center, a Christ little suited to the stern occasion, but seraphically beautiful; and on either side, in a long row, are the saints and worthies, while surrounding the Christ are a group of heavenly ministrants. They are the angels whose happy lot it is to sing praises before the throne, and those who, in mimicry of the warfare that there can never be known, wear little helmets and armor as the Saviour's bodyguard. It is in these little faces, perhaps, that we shall see the artist at his best. They are the tiniest that his art affords, but infinitely perfect. Uniform, yet without monotony, they epitomize that heavenly spirit that dominates the painter's thought.

(B 117) Below this heavenly group there are the open graves, so strange to our modern thought but precisely such as are suggested by any Italian cemetery. To the left of these graves are the Blessed. All classes and conditions are represented, but a quiet joy and peace suffuses all. The sward is decked with flowers, among which walk the souls of the happy Just, conducted about by angels in naïve, childlike sweetness. Angels and glorified spirits meet in a fond embrace, and hand in hand, go circling in childish glee in the games that children know. Off, far to the left, is a gate, the hint, beyond which no artist ever dared to go, of that heavenly



B 116, The Last Judgment. Academy, Florence. Fra Angelico, 1387–1455.

B 117, The Blessed (Detail, Last Judgment). Academy, Florence.
Fra Angelico, 1387–1455.

Jerusalem the description of which has so taxed the imagination of poet and seer. Through the open gateway stream long rays of golden light up which angels sail into the Presence which mortal eye can never behold. Nothing can exceed the charm of our artist's composition. Infinite beauty and quiet loveliness pervade both the forms and the suggestion of these transfigured faces.

The most violent of all contrasts is called for in this theme. On the opposite side are the spirits of the Damned, driven by demons toward the place of torture. The demons are conventional, such as Fra Angelico had seen rèpresented in works of art many a time. He contributes little to the conventional idea and exploits but imperfectly its ferocious possibilities. The Damned themselves fall far short of our weird imaginings. Their faces, doubtless intended to depict agonized terror, are somewhat ambiguously distorted. We are prepared to see their mock agony turned into a peal of laughter, and tragedy end in a joke. The artist is totally unable to express adequately those passions from which he had lived so remote, and as the completion of the picture, according to traditional ideas, called for a deeper depth and a more terrible scene, he gave up in sheer despair. The picture of Hell at the right is painted by another and a coarser hand. The good artist's scruples are not shared by the substitute. He is inadequate enough, but his inadequacy is due to his grossness, not to the shrinking tenderness of a soul unable to endure the thoughts that he was compelled to suggest. It would be difficult to find, confined within a single frame, in all Italy a contrast so great as that between the coarseness of this alien hand and the ineffable delicacy of the inspired monk.

But the artist's chief glory is forever associated with the Monastery of San Marco where he shares the honors with the great monk of a later day. There, in a long series of cells, he has wrought with varying but marvellous skill, the scenes of the Passion. Never has the suffering of the Saviour

been represented in so spiritual a guise. Compare the buffeting of the blind-folded Jesus with a representation of the passion by Rubens, and we have some idea of the abyss that separated these two interpreters of our faith. Supreme among these creations must be accounted the Annunciation (B 120). The Angel appears to Mary, announcing that she is to be the mother of the Lord, and she, bowing in obedience, replies unmistakably, by attitude and expression, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." Let the head drop a trifle lower, and instantly it becomes obsequious; hold it a little higher and something of haughty reserve mars the perfect spirit of the scene. Not by the deviation of a hair could this picture be modified without sacrificing something of its spiritual perfectness. If we wish to realize the possibilities of this theme for better, for worse, let us compare this creation of Fra Angelico with the same theme by Veronese, which for ogling, coquettish vulgarity, is the very bathos of art.

Again, fame resulted in a call from Rome. It must have been with no small trepidation that Fra Angelico, long sheltered within the walls of his monastery, heard at last this call from the Holy Father himself. Doubtless his mind, however, childlike and content, had its doubts, at least, let us say, its wondering questions as to things, in the faith not easy to understand. Indeed, he had even questioned whether his art were the highest form of service, and had decided to relinquish it and give himself unreservedly to devotion, when the Prior, less troubled with scruples of this sort, had peremptorily commanded him to resume his work; and this he did, nothing doubting, simple soul that he was. He had taken upon himself the vow of obedience. The Prior knew what was right, and responsibility and wisdom were his. And so the childlike life and faith continued. And now, not the Prior, but a greater than he, a higher and holier than he, was to be the master under whose eye his work was to be wrought.

B 120, The Annunciation. Upper Corridor, S. Marco, Florence. Fra Angelico, 1387–1455.

How much more perfectly the Vicar of Christ must appreciate the heavenly life; how much purer his vision than that of the simple monk! So we may imagine ran the thought of this simple spirit. Next to heaven itself must be association with this highest representative of the heavenly Master!

Alas for our good monk. Something else than heavenly visions are remembered in connection with the Vatican of those days. We will not draw back the curtain that hides too much that is unsightly. The Vatican had fallen upon evil days. Humanism, that ambitious program of philosophy and life which aimed to formulate the results of experience, not Christian, nor pagan, but of all human experience, had resulted, as such programs are wont to do, in relaxing the stern grip of Christian morals and faith, and in bringing back, not the greatness and the glory, but the weakness of paganism. Humanism it was meant to be; neo-paganism it really became. It was a passing phase in the experience of the Vatican, but one that coincided with the art of this wonderful century. At its best we find it in Lorenzo de' Medici, at its worst in some of the popes of the period.

Just what our good monk found, we do not know. Of one thing we are sure, the lovely traditional art to which he added a new spiritual touch, the art which, with its wealth of religious associations, had seemed so obviously Christian as contrasted with the new art that was so secular and profane, this art for which he had expected a still more illuminating insight, a more inspiring appreciation in the Vatican, he found disparaged. The Vatican stood for Masaccio, not for Fra Angelico. Doubtless they broke the news to him gently. Doubtless their disparagement of his ideals was a kindly one. Incidents are not recorded, but one can well imagine with what troubled spirit the monk slowly became conscious of the fact that the things that he had unhesitatingly rejected were the things that here were approved; that the ideals to which he had devoted his life were here regarded as obsolete and

outworn. Let us hope that no worse disillusioning was his portion.

As we enter the little Chapel of Nicholas V in the Vatican, by far the most religious spot in that vast palace of the popes, we recognize at once the delicacy and refinement of Fra Angelico. But there are things that seem strange to us. St. Stephen preaching is a pure and exalted spirit, but despite everything, he seems tame. There is a touch of the perfunctory in the representation even of this saint, while the listeners, for our artist at least, are commonplace. And behind them, in the background of the scene, tower huge buildings, utterly meaningless but showing evident interest in the problem that had been engaging the attention of the uninspired Masolino. Vistas and streets and architecture now fill the space where angels had been before. The artist is trying to be up to date.

It is pitiful to notice the cheap complacency with which the critics here recognize *progress* in Fra Angelico. The progress which they note is nothing but the surrender of a troubled and distracted spirit to ideals which, whatever their possibilities for the future, were for him worldly and profane. And soon we read, not without a sigh of relief, upon a humble tomb in a church near by, the name, Beato Angelico.

Of all tragedy there is none that compares with the shattering of a life's ideals. The torture of the flesh is as nothing to the torture of the spirit. When Savonarola was imprisoned and put to the torture, his followers, devout believers in the purity of his intentions, and completely committed to those ideals which in his earlier years he had stated with such uncompromising directness, but troubled later by those seeming compromises that as practical ruler he felt himself compelled to make, waited for some word from the dungeon which should explain what to them was inexplicable, which should restore their perfect faith before silence should still his voice forever. And at last the word came, saddest word in all his

history, a word so different from what they expected, but a word, properly understood, infinitely more significant than any other he could have given — "Brethren, pray for me, for God hath removed from me the spirit of prophecy."

CHAPTER VII

THE REVOLT AGAINST THE CHURCH

THE protest of Fra Angelico was in vain. The movement which he fain would check was not the movement of an individual or a group. It was the movement of a world. Conditions far beyond the limits of art were undergoing a profound change. The complete reconstruction of society, affecting every department of human life, could not but destroy the old ideals of art. Masaccio was not the creator of new ideals; he was but their expression. The old order was changing, yielding place to new, not without the loss of much that was good, as the inspired monk so deeply felt, a loss without adequate compensation, if we will, but the change was not the less inevitable. The change was from decoration and symbolism to realism, and, incidentally, from religious to secular control. This is not the place to discuss the inter-dependence of these ideas. Whether realistic art can ever be religious we may leave each to settle for himself. Certain it is that as art turned toward nature and away from symbolism and tradition, it lost the power to inspire reverence and incite to devotion. The church felt that loss and would have resisted the change much more strenuously and effectively than it did, had it not been that by a strange accident, the church for the time being fell under a control that was anything but religious. Backed up by the Vatican itself, the new ideals gained rapid headway until, when at last humanism lost its hold upon the church, the destruction of the old ideals was so far complete as to make their restoration impossible.

A dramatic touch was given to this transition by the peculiar temperament of one of the greatest of Florentine artists, Filippo Lippi. A waif in the streets of Florence, he had accepted the monastic life at the ripe age of eight years, in blissful ignorance both of the nature of that life and of his own temperament. He seems to have been a man of attractive personality, one who had the power to win the favor even of those who least approved of his conduct. It was a time, too, when laxity in the monastic orders was too common to feel the full measure of social reprobation. Yet Fra Lippo scandalized even this tolerant age. There was in his career of indulgence an element of romantic daring and a disregard of those standards of honor which commonly restrain even the social trespasser, which would have exposed him to the severest penalties if he had not enjoyed the immunity which is accorded to genius and personal charm. Doubtless the inconsistency between his vows and his conduct is responsible for much of the scandal which has gathered about his name. This scandal we might well ignore were it not for the unfortunate fact that his character, and, in particular, one of his escapades, exercised an important influence upon his art. Commissioned to execute some important frescoes in the Cathedral of Prato, he was allowed as his model a girl of good Florentine family, living in a convent there, whether as a nun, a novice, or a protégée of the nuns, is not quite clear. With this girl he eloped, to the mortal offense of her family and the scandal of the whole community. The penalty, according to the canon law of the church, was death, but a genius like Fra Lippo had little occasion, in any age, to fear extreme penalties. A dispensation from their vows enabled them to marry, and a son born of this union, Filippino Lippo, was destined, in his turn, to make a name in art. We shall soon have occasion to note that this temperament of Fra Lippo, and this episode in particular, had important consequences in the development

of Florentine art. It is surmised that even his death was not dissociated from the scandals of his life.

In all this surmise we must make much allowance for the exaggeration of rumor and gossip, but there can be little question that the monk made upon his time the impression of a talented libertine, endowed with great personal charm, though perhaps more a slave to unfortunate circumstance than a blackhearted villain. Despite his much scandalized career he seems to have borne a charmed life and to have been everywhere the object of admiration and good will if not of approval.

It is necessary, as we study Filippo Lippi's art to keep constantly in mind this contradiction between his calling and his temperament and conduct. It is quite gratuitous to assume that he was wholly wanton. Doubtless he felt often enough, and often enough had occasion to feel, the inconsistency between his life and his profession. This inconsistency must have galled him, goading him at first toward reform and repentance, possibly extorting from him many a painful penance, and then again, as the case became hopeless, goading him equally to madness against restraints which were conceived rather as arbitrarily laid upon him than as inhering in the order of nature. That this contradiction was present in his mind seems the inevitable conclusion from our study of his art. Dominated at first by a sincere piety, expressing the sentiments which were probably often enough his own, and which he sincerely though vainly strove to make paramount, it becomes toward the end wantonly defiant and breaks consciously and violently with sacred tradition.

The first authentic work of Filippo Lippi is a beautiful Annunciation (B 154), extremely simple, the standing figures of the angel and the Virgin occupying two panels which would hardly permit of any other representation. There is an absence of pictorial background, though not the background of flat gold to which we have been accustomed. The figures

B 154, The Annunciation. Academy, Florence.
Fra Filippo Lippi, 1406?–1469.

have the same tender loveliness if not quite the same spiritual expression that we find in similar works by Fra Angelico. There is indeed something closely akin between these faces and that of the Madonna in Fra Angelico's famous Annunciation already referred to. There is an equally beautiful, possibly even more subtle feeling for color. The resemblance goes still farther. The draperies, which fall in not very natural but traditional folds, remind us of the draperies on the familiar angels from the frame of the Madonna of the Linaiuoli. There is no downright imitation of Fra Angelico. There is, on the contrary, seemingly a kinship of spirit. The observer, gazing upon this work, might have exclaimed, "Here we have another Fra Angelico, not quite mature as yet, but give him a little time and he will rival the work of the blessed brother." There is not a hint as yet that we have in the painter a revolté.

Our next picture is again, strangely enough, an Annunciation (B 155). Differently shaped and differently conceived, it is, after all, not wholly different in spirit. The Virgin, sitting now, bows perhaps with less suggestion of spiritual comprehension than in the work of Fra Angelico, but, after all, in close sympathy with it. The work is now highly pictorial. There is background, perspective and a great deal of beautiful, though not always appropriate detail. The perspective is careless but vivid, for our artist had a bit of slapdash freedom about him which now begins to show. As we turn to the angel, however, we can clearly trace the beginning of a new spirit. The angel is decorous, performs his part perfectly, much as a child ministrant before the altar, but the face suggests the nonchalance and the carefreeness of the child and not the spiritual significance of the occasion. There is nothing at all of the tender reverence that is so beautifully manifest in the earlier work. The angel is simply a lovely boy with quite inappropriate wings. His boyishness is in no wise offensive. It merely is not in the least redolent of sanctity.

B 155, The Annunciation. National Gallery, London. Fra Filippo Lippi, 1406?–1469.

If now we turn to the beautiful Madonna and Child with two Angels (B 152), in the Uffizi, we see a still further advance along the same line, not to mention advance along other lines, for our artist has become the great colorist of Florence. Nothing can surpass the beauty with which he now tones his color with shadow, giving it that richness and depth which the mere surface color of ordinary Florentine art can never know. But we must confine our interest for the moment rather to his spiritual ideals. The Madonna is still fairly true to her rôle. There may be a suspicion of spiritual shallowness in her demure face but she in no wise travesties the part. But the Christ Child, and still more, the childish angel that complete the picture, have lost the faintest suggestion of spiritual things. More materialistic, healthy little animals it would be impossible to imagine. There is more than animalism and health; there is the most undisguised suggestion of mischief in these sturdy little faces, more particularly the angel. There is the plain evolution now of a type which henceforth is not to be dissociated from Fra Lippo's work, a type good-natured and buoyant but irreconcilable with spiritual suggestion.

Precisely the same type of Christ Child appears in the Madonna of the Pitti, and as we look closer we make out the same type of Madonna. We are perhaps somewhat more in doubt than before as to whether she takes her Madonna rôle very seriously. She is demure and proper on the surface rather than deeply imbued with the heavenly temper. Indeed, the longer we gaze, the less suited to the rôle she seems. It is therefore not so much of a surprise when we learn that in both the pictures we have been studying we have a portrait of the woman of the episode above referred to. The inappropriateness of this choice is not aggravated by any unnecessary suggestion on the artist's part, but it remains a shocking innovation, little less than an outrage for those who have the slightest concern for the older ideal. Up to this time

B 152; Madonna and Child, with Angels. Uffizi, Florence.
Fra Filippo Lippi, 1406?–1469.

the introduction of portraits in sacred pictures had been rare, not to say unknown. The few cases previously recorded are for the most part in second-class pictures and rest upon doubtful authority. In the later Renaissance such portraits are more frequent; in the art of the North exceedingly common. The Sistine Madonna is a portrait. But the great artists of the Italian Renaissance are ordinarily careful to quite disguise the portrait. The personality is transfigured, and the picture becomes rather a derivative than a true portrait, the disturbing irrelevancy being thus greatly diminished. In the northern pictures, too, where the artist was usually sadly lacking in high-minded propriety, not to say in sense of humor, as also in some of the better Venetian works, the portraits introduced are distinctly excluded from the sacred rôles. The picture of the donor is usually in a side panel in an attitude of devotion toward the saint for whose picture he has paid. Or, if included in the picture, as in Titian's Madonna of the Pesaro Family, the separation of rôle is none the less distinct. Even so, the portrait is a disturbing factor, at least to the generation who recognizes its identity. We have but to transfer it into our own time and to imagine sacred pictures with saints and prophets interspersed with portraits of present day statesmen or captains of industry to appreciate the incongruity of these medleys, fortunately so rare in better Italian art.

But Fra Lippo has done worse than this. He has not merely painted a portrait as a detail in a picture representing a sacred person. The sacred person herself is a portrait, and the portrait of a person distinctly disreputable, to the common knowledge of all spectators. This is little less than conscious sacrilege, and can be interpreted only as a deliberate affront to the religious sentiments of his time. The artist, as we have seen, was little in sympathy with these sentiments at the best, and the consciousness that he was under indictment before the bar of social sentiment was one to which he

could not be indifferent, and whose influence he could not throw off.

In other and larger works we find the same traits, as well as some other characteristics that are worthy of note. Such, for instance, is the Coronation of the Virgin to which Browning refers in his well-known poem, as also the Virgin with attendant Saints. We have the same types, the same good-natured, carnal temperament, not vicious but unspiritual. We have the same indifference to spiritual symbols and suggestion. Notice, for instance, that in the Coronation of the Virgin, nearly every person in the company turns his back upon the performance and looks out from the picture, conscious of the audience, not conscious of the ostensible subject of interest. Note again the emergence of Fra Lippo himself in the right foreground of the picture, — a masterly portrait and suggestive of the jovial good-nature of the man, but again an irrelevancy bordering on profanation. The same spirit characterizes the still more ambitious scene of the Burial of St. Stephen, a part of the great series of frescoes which Fra Lippo executed upon the walls of the Cathedral of Prato. Here for the first time, but unfortunately not for the last time, we see the total disregard of the real spirit of the theme. Only a hired mourner or two, making ado over the body of the saint, while the others line up in ranks as though the camera were focused upon them and the one matter of real importance were their appearance in the picture.

To sum up, Fra Lippo makes a distinct advance in the technique of Florentine art. He does not catch the marvelous vision of Masaccio; no later Florentine did. The mystery of atmosphere and light, the dreamy poetry of nature, that was reserved for another time and for another environment of feeling and ideas. But, ignoring Masaccio for the moment — that spirit at once so transcendent and so alien to the temper of his time, Fra Lippo takes up the art of Masolino and the others, and distinctly plods farther. His

greater mastery of the human figure, his improvement of perspective, above all things and unique in his work, his magnificent mastery of color, could not but command for him a respect which made him influential in the farther development of art. But recognizing all these facts, the real significance of Fra Lippo is the changing temper which he brought to the traditional themes of Florentine art. Himself a monk, and therefore, in a certain sense, conspicuously aligned with the ecclesiastical influence, he openly defies that ecclesiastical leadership, and that the more so because he seldom if ever abandons the religious theme. "It is saints and saints and saints again," and painted with something of the listlessness and satiety which Browning's lines suggest, but not unfrequently painted with a deliberate fling disastrous to their sanctity. Had he been less of a painter, his revolt against the religious tutelage of art would have had less influence. As it was, it coincided with the general movement of his time. There were few who were disposed to openly affront the church. There were few to whom the features of a discredited woman in the rôle of Madonna did not bring something of a shock. But that sacredness which Fra Angelico saw in these themes and which he tried to instill so deeply into art was incompatible with the growing enthusiasm for nature. To explain is necessarily to substitute known terms for the unknown, that is, to restate the thing we are explaining in terms of our own experience. A thing thus explained becomes natural, and once natural, it ceases of necessity to be supernatural. The realistic tendency in art was also and perforce a secularizing tendency in art. This being true, the mighty influence of Fra Lippo came at a fateful moment. None of his followers indulged in open flings at the Church. None make angels and saints quite so carnal as Fra Lippo, still less do they travesty these themes in his audacious manner. But his listlessness and satiated appetite for these themes from this time is normal.

No Florentine after Fra Lippo's time hesitates to introduce portraits into sacred scenes. The Medici bring their Magian gifts to the Christ Child. Burghers of Florence line up to see the angel appear unto Zacharias. The thrill of recognition and of meaning which once greeted these themes is gone now forever. Florentine art as the expression of religious sentiment has run its course. Only the great Florentine whose art transcends that of Florence, was able, contrary to all precedent, and by the exercise of superhuman powers, again to make these exhausted themes glow with feeling and life.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NEW PAGANISM AND THE OLD FAITH

FILIPPO LIPPI died in 1469. There was a human generation left in this century which was still to be Florentine. After that, the little city no longer houses the art which she has produced. This generation belongs to two painters, the very antipodes in character, but each significant of the tendencies and limitations of the time — Botticelli and Ghirlandajo. Botticelli is the pagan poet of the Renaissance. The generation in which he was active marked the triumph of humanism. That philosophy, as its ambitious name suggests, aimed to be the résumé of human experience, not of Christian experience nor of Italian experience, nor of any other territory or period. All that was good in paganism, its philosophy, its religion and its art, as likewise in Christianity and all other ages, lands and faiths, was to be united in this great synthesis. Of course local and Christian experiences were infinitely nearer to hand. They saturated the common consciousness. Inevitably, therefore, the great task was to bring in those that were remoter in time and place, to fashion new sympathies, break down old prejudices, and make way for the larger view. Just as inevitably this task led the humanist to emphasize these alien and remoter elements, more or less to the disparagement of the local, against whose intolerance he was continually compelled to fight. And just as inevitably, the ambitious program of thought and morals was one to which life could not adjust itself. The sublimity of the pagan philosophy was no safeguard against the moral laxity which inevitably resulted

from the shattering of local prejudices, often the safeguards and ministers of righteousness. Humanism thus wears two characters as we contemplate the history of this period — a theoretical character which is one of magnificent but rather incoherent eclecticism, and a practical character which is one of more than pagan laxity. In the words of George Eliot's superb characterization, "It was an age of pedantic, impossible ethics, uttered by rote, and of crude passions acted out with childish impulsiveness." Humanism in this age, theoretical and practical, had for the moment won the intelligent classes in Italy and even captured the Vatican which it was to hold for a century. It expressed itself perhaps at its best in the splendid court of the Medici. There it came nearest to ripening into an effective system of guidance for conduct, and though the lives of even its best representatives were seldom above reproach, we may gaze with something of wistfulness at that marvelous development of taste which at once filled life with poetry and came so near serving as an effective substitute for the irksome thralls of conscience.

It was in this headquarters of Renaissance Humanism that we find Botticelli at his best, a tender and sensitive spirit. Too refined by nature to be attracted by the grossness which in his time was never far to seek, he was drawn as to a magnet by the splendid refinement and subtle taste of the Medicean court. In his work, the love of the classical and the sympathy for the Christian find more complete reconciliation than in the work of any other Italian. Both themes were in vogue in this truly tolerant and appreciative court of Lorenzo. Both themes were ardently grasped by the fine sensibility of the artist poet. Added to this larger taste is a trait that is never far to seek, whose value in art is more dubious, — a fondness for allegory and for esoteric symbolism, often completely unfathomable and subject to the most various interpretation. In this we see a point of contact with the great Savonarola who was to loom so large upon his later

horizon. No exegesis of the great preacher was too far fetched to appeal to the weird imagination of Botticelli.

Botticelli's art has been the subject of striking differences of opinion. In his own day he seems to have been but moderately famous, being celebrated rather as a clever draughtsman than as an artist otherwise great. In our day he has strangely risen to favor, often to the irritation of the studio pedagogue, who sees in his work the incarnation of artist's license. The judgment of these critics is strikingly at variance with alleged Florentine contemporary opinion, for the modern painter is certain above all things that Botticelli could not draw. His works give support to both opinions, according to the example chosen.

Perhaps the first accredited work of Botticelli which we possess is Judith who, with her servant, is bearing the head of Holofernes. It has some striking characteristics, but is of doubtful excellence. Judith poses quite unmistakably for picture purposes. She has neither the grim determination necessary to account for her heroic act, nor yet an attitude which would permit of the rapid motion which her draperies and the theme suggest. Other discrepancies might be noted, but the real significance of the picture is the novel manner in which the draperies are made to do duty for manifold suggestion. These draperies become the distinguishing external mark of Botticelli's art. They are never still. If his figures move, these draperies that flutter to the slightest imaginable wind, translate their motion and emphasize it to our imagination. Even if the figure stands still, the draperies seem to prophesy the motion which is soon to follow, or recall the motion which has ceased but a moment before. Mobile when not moving, these draperies make his figures instinct with a curious mercurial life. They are artificial but expressive, the despair and the pitfall of his contemporaries who tried to imitate them, as did even Fra Lippo, his teacher, and the stately Ghirlandajo,

whose prosaic dignity thus garbed is simply grotesque. But these draperies are only the key to a larger application of the same spirit. It is the spirit of rather wanton poetic license, but always under the guidance of a dreamy, poetic fancy. This is best revealed in the remarkable pictures which were painted for the Medici and which are widely and popularly known in this age of revived interest in Botticelli. Their popularity is a doubtful fad. It is more than questionable whether many of their admirers see in them more than an enigmatical strangeness, a riddle to be guessed, an opportunity for posing and affectation of fondness. But beyond question they have succeeded in fascinating great numbers who are totally unable to analyze their charm. It is against these pictures that the criticism of the modern painter is oftenest directed. Take, for instance, the three graces in the Allegory of Spring (B 168). How impossible their figures! How unstable their attitudes! How unthinkable their draperies! It is the despair of the studio disciplinarian to find his students hankering after Botticelli. He sets at naught all the rules which the studio inculcates.

The prosaic interpreter of themes is equally at a loss to know what to make out of such a picture. Who are these three people that stand meaningless as well as impossible? The Three Graces by popular consent, but only because they are three, and no other trinity is thinkable. Who is this figure in the center; this much beflowered figure to the right; this filmy garmented fleeing woman pursued by the satyr from behind? Sorry attempts are made to identify these various figures. In the center is Venus, we are told; the Three Graces to the left. The figure with the flowers in her lap and on her garments is obviously Flora. The pursued female is the spring-time which is overtaken by the untimely returning winter. All such explanations are worse than useless.

That Botticelli had unfathomable, esoteric suggestions

B 168, Allegory of Spring. Academy, Florence. Botticelli, 1447–1510.

back of his picture is probable enough. That they are the essence of his picture is certainly not true. Can we not for a moment slip the leash both of studio rule and literary label, and find a meaning in Botticelli's strange art? First of all, let us see whether Botticelli's drawing is helpless or wanton. Could he or could he not draw correctly? Let us turn for a moment to the Visit of the Magi (B 175), a picture which has in its extremest form the vice already referred to, of irrelevant portrait, but in a form so extreme that it almost ceases to be a vice. Nobody takes the theme in this case with the slightest seriousness. The Holy Family are the merest accident in the background. Everybody knows that the kneeling king is Cosimo de' Medici, that the other members of the same group are members of this same house, that off to the right are the magnificent followers, the strong men whom their penetration chose and placed in strategic positions. It is a group portrait, that is all, but in this case that is much, for it is beyond question the finest group portrait in the world, in the significance of the characters, the ease and naturalness of their postures, the absence of consciousness, the perfect analysis both of character and of status as expressed in bearing and in feature. In all these particulars this group has no superior, if indeed it has an equal in the art of the world. And notice how perfectly these figures accommodate themselves to the needs of the picture. No one gets in anyone's way, yet there is no lining up, no straining of position or attitude to prevent interference, as in Fra Lippo's Burial of St. Stephen already referred to. All is spontaneous, natural, easy. A moment's glance at this picture, which will repay the profoundest study, convinces us that Botticelli was absolute master of the draughtsman's art. When he chose to draw actualities he could do so easily, unerringly. More than that, Botticelli had a power, perhaps unrivaled in the history of Florentine art, of lifting out the great traits of character into prominence and delineating them with a few

B 175, The Adoration of the Magi. Uffizi, Florence. Botticelli, 1447–1510.

simple strokes uncomplicated by meaningless details. Compare for a moment a group of heads from his great fresco in the Sistine Ceiling (B 172), with a like group of faces from Ghirlandajo's work in Santa Maria Novella. Botticelli's work is simple; the features are the fewest possible; no unnecessary lines complicate the face. Yet these heads epitomize in an unparalleled degree the characters of the men whom they represent. Take the first on the left. Strong, coarse-grained, alert, he turns his head to one side in a manner instinct with energy. Rude and coarse he may be, but not ungenerous. How easily we can find a place where that man would fit! How positive we are that we know his essential characteristics! Take the second, the youth in the background. Delicate and dreamy-eyed, his gaze turned toward heaven, unmindful, it may be, of the ditch that lies in his path, he is the essence of poetry, that unpractical dweller in dreamland to whom the world owes so much. These two circles of character scarce touch each other at a single point of their circumference. The third is different. No poet he; coarse like the first, logy and selfish, it may be. Not to him, as to the first, should we turn for the quick impulse of generosity in misfortune; still less should we share with him the heavenly vision of our youth. Turn to the next, and again all changes. A fine face, suggestive of insight and of poise, soberness that is remotely suggestive of pathos, and the certain guarantee of interpretive sympathy. Most attractive of the group, this face, this admirable portrait, which we are glad to identify as the portrait of Sandro Botticelli. One more remains, reminiscent of the others, yet so different from them all. Notice the head thrown back, the chest thrown out, the face, aristocratic and intellectual, but cold and unsympathetic. Here is the representative of that aristocracy of privilege and power which deepens the rift betwixt itself and humanity.

These men were real men of Botticelli's time. These men

B 172, The Punishment of Korah (Detail). Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome.
Botticelli, 1447–1510.

had many-sided characters in which lesser traits often disguised their true character. They had their contrasted moments and conflicting impulses. But Botticelli, with a magician's hand, strips away the obscuring littleness, and outlines with a few bold strokes the horoscope of their character. No, Botticelli was no clumsy draughtsman. We have but to turn to such works as these to see in him a master of his craft. Why then these confessedly unnatural figures in the Allegory of Spring or the Birth of Venus? Why this poetry so weird that it jars against the commoner sense?

First of all, it must be remembered that painting, with all its resources at this time, was self-limited in its means. The Italian artists represented, and would represent, only the human figure. Landscape scarce finds the slightest recognition in Florentine art. In Venetian art it was but a decorative background. Suggest Spring as a topic to a modern artist and what would he think of? Instantly the hazes and mists of this youth of the year, the buds and blossoms, the song of birds and the building of nests, the myriad things by which impersonal nature expresses her springtime mood. But all of that was a sealed book to the Florentine artist. The human being was his theme, and through this he must in some way suggest, if he suggested at all, the mood that his subject required. How shall we express with human figures the mood of the springtime? Identifications and labels on individual figures are worse than useless. Botticelli would fain give us these figures, nameless or named, in such guise as to suggest the springtime mood. That mood, difficult to formulate in words, is, after all, easily defined to our feeling. It is the time when the sap rises in the trees and nature that has drawn into her shell comes out into the sunshine. It is a time when rigidity again becomes fluid, when gravitation seems to relax her grip, and lightness takes the place of heaviness. It is the time when "the pulses leap, the feet have wings." This mood Botticelli would fain suggest to us, and

hence these figures, lightly clad, not because the weather is warm, but rather because lightness is his theme, stand and yet do not stand, but rather float, buoyed up by this spirit of the spring. Not the most natural way of suggesting this theme, but the Florentine way, a theme which we must catch by sympathy with daring metaphor rather than by prosaic interpretation of terms. And if approached in that mood, we can see at a glance that Botticelli's departures from nature are merely departures in the interest of poetic interpretation, that these figures which do not stand, are figures which should not stand, and would belie their theme if they did.

All men fall into two classes, or, rather let us say, they tend toward one or the other of two extremes, the prosaic and the poetical. We have all heard the familiar line: —

"Sermons in stones; books in the running brooks,"

but not all have heard the emendation of a hypothetical critic: "Obviously here is a mistake due to the mere shifting of words, the accident of a careless printer. What the poet intended to write was not 'Sermons in stones; books in the running brooks,' but 'Sermons in books; stones in the running brooks.'" How obvious when once the suggestion is made! There are those who see books in the running brooks and others who see only stones in the running brooks. Each sees something worth seeing, each has his place in the great scheme of things. The one is the scientist, the other the poet.

Most artists have something in their work for both temperaments. Most pictures appeal to us in a variety of ways. For instance, we have a picture of Washington crossing the Delaware. The drawing may be indifferent, the coloring bad or the reverse. Independent of these considerations there is the appeal to our patriotism. We are Americans, and the memory of an heroic exploit in behalf of our cause

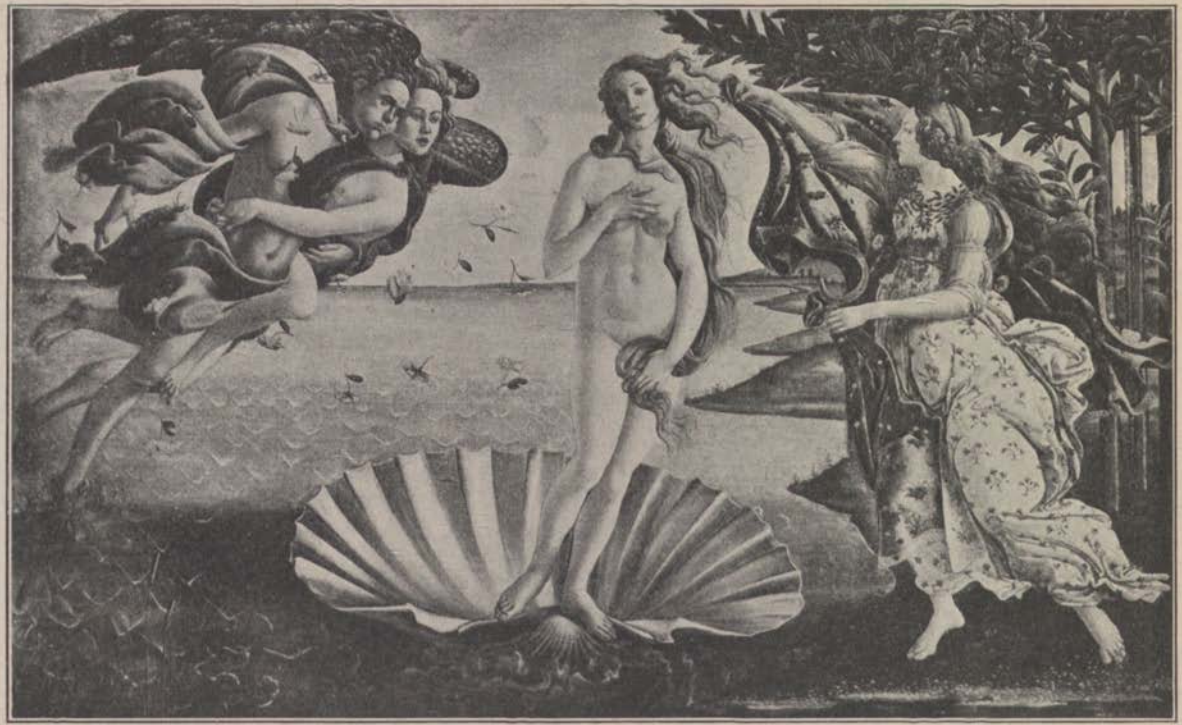
appeals to our sympathy. We forthwith decide the picture to be fine, though to a lover of poetry of color and line it might be execrable. The writer once visited the European galleries with a little company among whom was a lady, singularly obtuse to many aspects of art. The great masters made almost no impression upon her. Effort to interest her proved unavailing and was finally quite abandoned. But quite unexpectedly art made its appeal. It was a wretched picture scarce worth the name of painting, but it represented John the Baptist rebuking Herod for taking his brother Philip's wife. The lady had pronounced sentiments on the moral problem involved, and her heart instantly warmed to the tartan. Now to most of us, art makes its appeal largely by virtue of associations which, if not extrinsic, are far from being representative of the art in question. Few of us realize that the pictures that we care most for, are pictures with which we have made connection only at the outer edge of art's domain. The great central interest, the one recognized as supreme in that form of art by the consensus of human experience, we perhaps have ignored altogether.

Botticelli resembles certain poets in being what we may call an utter artist. Most so-called poetry is a mingling of poetry and prose. In Botticelli's art there is no prose at all, nothing that can be "boiled down into horse sense." There is almost nothing in his work to appeal to the prosaic side of our nature. There is patriotism, to be sure, as when he celebrates an achievement of Lorenzo in his weird picture of Pallas leading the Centaur, but even then it is an indirect, metaphorical allusion rather than a prosaic representation, and as we come to such pictures as the Allegory of Spring, which are peculiarly characteristic, the importance of giving ourselves up wholly to the extremer poetical mood becomes more apparent. The futility of dissecting and labeling a picture like this may be best suggested by similar attempts

to interpret Poe's Raven or Coleridge's Ancient Mariner. The only result is to completely sidetrack our inquiry. These poems are poetry par excellence, more utterly poetry than anything in Tennyson, though not necessarily more valuable to us, perhaps less so, for that very reason. But the only interpretation that is possible is to give oneself up to their splendid rhythm until, bit by bit, it weaves its spell around us and holds us fettered as the Mariner did the wedding guest. To dissect and label is simply to break this rhythm and destroy it altogether. Let us therefore, in contemplating a picture like Botticelli's Spring, simply give ourselves up to the remote suggestion of a temper which all have experienced, the beauty of which all appreciate, and which it is plainly the artist's purpose to suggest, though his means are not the most familiar, or perhaps the best suited for the purpose.

The religious art of Botticelli is closely akin, however different the theme. It is significant and, to the writer's mind, a wholesome sign, that Botticelli's Madonnas have become singularly popular in recent times. No voluptuous taste is here suggested, no splendid mundane beauty, no mere manifestation of maternal tenderness. They are distinctly spiritual. There is an infinite delicacy about the finely chiseled features and a pathos as exquisite as it is unobtrusive in the tender melancholy which just tinges face and figure. Botticelli is uniformly characterized by refinement, by poetic imagination turning toward the unusual and the weird, by a fondness for haunting suggestion which stimulates the mind to ceaseless wonder but never translates itself over into scientific fact.

There is a striking significance which we cannot but attach to Botticelli's Birth of Venus (B 167). The figure is identical, not merely in face and attitude, but even in sentiment expressed, with one of the best known of his Madonnas, the Madonna of the Lilies. The sole difference is that the head is tipped in the opposite way. Madonna and Venus are identical, but



B 167, The Birth of Venus. Uffizi, Florence. Botticelli, 1447–1510.

which? Is the Venus a Madonna or is the Madonna a Venus? We can hardly hesitate. This shrinking apologetic creature, who is wafted tenderly toward the shore upon her shell, to be met by the attendant grotesquely eager to clothe her nakedness, is instinct with the grace and delicacy of the artist. But let us stop for a moment and recall the theme which Botticelli was ostensibly trying to express. It is in the period in which his thought turns strongly toward the ancient poetry. But imagine for a moment a Greek Aphrodite presented upon the scene like this. The thought is inexpressibly grotesque. What does it mean? Suppose we were to ask Botticelli, in good-natured criticism, if he really thought that the Greeks conceived the scene like this. He would doubtless have replied, with a moment's hesitation, "No, I don't suppose they did." "Well, then, why do you so represent her?" To which there could have been only a reply something like this, "I wanted to make her as beautiful as possible. She did not appeal to me in the other way." Must we not so read his picture? And what does this mean? True artist that he was, beauty was his goal. It was in the time of that neo-paganism in which there is so much before which we would draw the curtain, a time when we are too wont to say that Christianity was but a fiction and had taken no real hold on life. Yet here is a man actuated only by the impulse to make his Venus beautiful, who endows her with delicate, shrinking modesty and is quick to hide her nakedness from our gaze. Madonna-like tenderness and a sensitiveness unknown to classic thought is indispensable to his ideal of beauty. Surely the centuries of Christian tradition have not been for naught. Conduct was pagan enough, but though conduct is the goal of all ideals, ideals are always more than conduct. It was regrettable that accepted ideals were so little respected in life, but it is significant that at this moment when Christianity was most disparaged and art and thought turned most avowedly toward the unchristian

past, the artist who strove most frankly to reproduce the poetry of paganism should have unconsciously revealed how helplessly, hopelessly, the world had become Christian.

Botticelli's later years were lived under the spell of the great magician, Girolamo Savonarola. The great preacher found in this pagan poet of the Renaissance the most responsive of spirits, and his message wrought upon the romantic mysticism of the artist its indelible impression. Unfortunately, this influence was too overwhelming to find expression through his art. The six years of Savonarola's supremacy were not favorable to artistic production. The Medici were not dispensing their largess, and devout Piagnoni were not patrons of art. The work of all artists was intermittent at this time. For Botticelli the intermission was well-nigh permanent. The rare messages which come to us from that period in which he looked back upon the great tragedy and listened to the voice that wrought its spell, are full of a weird apocalyptic symbolism that defies interpretation. It was the grace, the tender sentiment, the infinitely expressive line in Botticelli's art that made him the truest artist of this wonderful century. The tendency to allegory and mysticism always with him was the least valuable of his powers, and with its exaggeration, the charm of his art passed away.

Contemporary with Botticelli is Ghirlandajo, the garland maker, whose interest to us in the history of Florentine art is not a little enhanced by the fact that to him was given the privilege of instructing the youth of Michelangelo. In marked contrast to his great poetical contemporary, Ghirlandajo lacks at once the dashing bravado of Filippo Lippi and the dreamy poetry of Botticelli. As we pass his works in rapid survey, our first impression is that he is rather tiresomely correct, that he never makes a slip and never has an inspiration. Even this uncomplimentary judgment, however, contains implied praise which it is but fair to recognize. It was the task of Ghirlandajo to formulate and systematize

Florentine procedure in painting. Fra Lippo, as we have seen, made great advances in the matter of technique but he never was really steady or reliable. Ghirlandajo was nothing if not methodic. The law of linear perspective, for instance, that perspective which was almost the sole reliance of Florentine artists, was not formulated until about Ghirlandajo's time. The artists felt their way slowly toward the formulation of certain laws. The lines of vision converge more or less; so would run their formulation. It meant much to the science of art to have a law so formulated that it became mathematical, so formulated that the convergence of lines could be scientifically determined and quantitatively expressed. All that has little to do with art as a thing of the spirit, but, after all, it has something to do with it, for it tends to remove those oddities and unnaturalnesses which are liable to distract our attention in contemplation of the real theme itself.

It goes without saying that Ghirlandajo invented nothing surprisingly new. He did not go back and grasp the secret of Masaccio's open-air perspective. He rather absurdly manifests the lack of it. That is, he follows Florentine procedure in a matter of fact and unsubtle way For instance, in one of his famous frescoes in Santa Maria Novella he introduces a long wall running from front to rear in his picture at a slight angle so that we may note its immense length and by its converging lines may appreciate the distance, much after the fashion of Masolino's arcade, but it has neither the elegance nor the plausibility of the arcade. It is not connected with any building or with any other wall. It serves no purpose except that of perspective. It is used with great technical correctness but with no feeling whatever for meaning or sentiment. One can understand Michelangelo's later judgment upon his master which he expressed with such undisguised contempt. Imagine a huge wall running endwise into some picture of the Sistine ceiling just to give the suggestion of perspective and depth!

If we turn to his portrayal of character, he is equally matter of fact and uninspired. Few pictures are less soul-stirring than his Last Supper, in which the disciples and even the Christ himself are represented in a monumental dignity that borders on stolidity. There is not the faintest touch of that fine emotion, that deeper spiritual passion which is so inseparable in our thought from the life of the great Master. This lack of inspired feeling, on the other hand, opens the door wide to irrelevancies. In his Adoration of the Child, the Madonna, a rather elegant society woman, goes properly through the forms, while the quite impossible shepherds, who prove to be Ghirlandajo and his brothers, are ostentatiously rather than devoutly present. Other irrelevancies are even more glaring — the preposterous elegance of the marble sarcophagus which he has wrought for the Child's manger, the silly, spiritual participation of his donkey and cow, and, finally, the elaborate architecture which fills the foreground and background with needlessly abundant and irrelevant details. All this quickly arouses a feeling of impatience.

If we return to Santa Maria Novella where his great frescoes must determine his title to fame, the same trait appears in more dignified but perhaps more fundamental form. The angel appears to Zacharias in the background, while in solid ranks are lined up on either side the great Florentines of his time. They are quite conscious of their importance and stand there in their best clothes and their best dignity, but completely intercepting any attention that we might be tempted to give to the angel and Zacharias. More striking still is this interference in the picture of the Nativity of John the Baptist (B 200), where the attention of nurse, mother, and all other participants is completely absorbed by the awe-inspiring presence of a lady of the Tornabuoni family who, in queenly dignity, accepts as of right this universal homage, ignoring the child and assuming as a matter of course that we will do the same. The disregard of the

B 200, The Birth of John the Baptist. Choir, S. Maria Novella, Florence. Ghirlandajo, 1449–1494.

alleged religious theme begun by Fra Lippo is here as complete as it is in Botticelli's Visit of the Magi, but without the compensations which Botticelli gives us, for Botticelli often in such cases gives us a group of portraits, always free from Ghirlandajo's stage consciousness and so profoundly significant as to largely compensate for the loss of the religious theme, while in other religious pictures, notably of the Madonna, he is profoundly and significantly true. Not so Ghirlandajo. There is never any wasted homage in his religious themes, though they are the only themes that he treats. Ostensibly religious, he is absolutely committed, not to the poetry of paganism like Botticelli in his earlier years, but to the matter of fact realism of his time, and, withal, in these scenes, religious or otherwise, there is a uniform, monumental decorum which is manifestly perfect and often egregiously out of place. It is easy to dismiss Ghirlandajo at this point as a great painter who knew nothing of art.

But in our very criticism there is a suggestion of one quality which must be credited to Ghirlandajo's account. His dignity, his monumental decorum, are oftentimes out of place. They are always fatal to a dramatic theme; they are hardly more suitable in a theme whose spirit is that of intimacy and realism. But there are certain great state occasions in which Ghirlandajo's art finds its appropriate place. He would have been, of all the Italian painters, the one best suited to paint the coronation of King George. The majesty of perfect order, the beauty of formalism (for it has a beauty), this was Ghirlandajo's theme. To it he bends all the resources of his art. Notice the figure of Giovanna Tornabuoni already referred to. She is, of course, not accessory to the theme. The theme is accessory to her. She is in that sense absurdly out of place. But she is magnificent in her dignity, and bears well the part which wealth and rank impose upon her. And notice how the details of Ghirlandajo's art contribute to that fact. Just imagine her for a moment without the stately

dress which she wears and clad in the delicate draperies of Botticelli, the draperies of the Judith, for instance. All her dignity would disappear. She would be totally out of character. These stately draperies, which, by the way, are never hard and stiff, merely dignified and magnificent, are as appropriate to Ghirlandajo's great theme as is Botticelli's style to his very different temper. It is neither poetry in lighter vein nor the deep voice of tragedy or passion, nor yet the spirit of subtle spirituality that Ghirlandajo is fitted to express. But there is a poetry none the less in the majesty of those great formal occasions which life sometimes offers. For these Ghirlandajo was suited, but these, alas, were not the themes that were popular in his time, which inclined toward the dramatic. So his dignity, so often out of place, seems to us stilted and pompous; his passivity and decorum under conditions of stirring passion seem to us stolidity. So in some degree they must be accounted. No man who entered so little into the spirit of the themes which he represented as did Ghirlandajo, can be thought a man of subtle insight. None the less, the ambition for which he so seldom found occasion, was a real ambition, and is to be remembered as one of the contributions to Florentine art.

But at the last we must repeat what we said at first. Ghirlandajo stands for the finished technique of Florentine art. What had been approximated before, now became final and complete. The Florentine way of painting was not the only way nor even the best way, but such as it was, Ghirlandajo said the last word. In him the science of Florentine painting culminated, and with him its career as such terminated.

But in him the spiritual significance of Florentine art dwindled to the vanishing point. The travail and triumph of the spirit which Florentine art had striven to express, no longer interest Ghirlandajo. The soul-stirring message of prophet and martyr he repeats perfunctorily with the droning intonation of the mass, and with a mind all too evidently

intent on ritualistic decorum, not to say on extrinsic and irrelevant things. It is time for a new vision and a new prophet, but the creative power of both Ghirlandajo and the city that bred him, seemed spent. It is significant of the whole relation of things that both Leonardo and Ghirlandajo's great pupil left Florence soon after Ghirlandajo's death, and that they bore to other centers the art which she had made great, but which, in herself, she could no longer make greater. She had produced her supreme offspring and had exhausted her energy in giving them birth.

CHAPTER IX

THE CONTRIBUTION OF PISA

We have now traced the evolution of Italian art along a single line through the most distinctive of its developments. We have gotten a glimpse of Greek painting as known and practiced in Italy, of the mosaics that were derived from it either on Roman or Eastern soil, and finally, of the easy but significant transition from mosaic to the more facile painting which better suited the realistic purpose of the Renaissance. We have seen in this early period the slow shifting of emphasis, the swing of the great pendulum from idealized naturalism over to decoration, the wax and wane of the pictorial, and finally the triumph of naturalism again in the Renaissance. And last we have noticed along with the perfecting of the Florentine technique, the exhaustion of the Christian theme. Florentine painting has run its course. We stand at the threshold of that greater development which is to give us names that are above every name. But before considering the achievements of Leonardo and Michelangelo, we must briefly return and follow the parallel but different development of that sister art which the Florentine never dissociated from painting in his thought, and which was to be the especial expression of his feeling in this latest period.

As stated in a former chapter, the art of sculpture died almost utterly in the middle ages. Its continuance was architectural rather than sculptural in the strict sense of the word. Strangely conventional representations of animals and men occur in the decoration of the great mediæval churches in Italy, and still more in the north where, in the

splendid Gothic period, they assume a character worthy of consideration as sculpture. But of all the arts, sculpture was the most impossible for a people hampered by poverty. There is no link like the mosaics to connect the sculpture of the Renaissance with that of the Greek. But if the practice of sculpture did not continue, the works of sculpture did. Few have been preserved from ancient times, but those few have preserved more of their original character than could have been preserved by an art which was dependent for its continuance on the lessening skill of successive generations. The revival of sculpture, therefore, is not unnaturally referred to the interest which was aroused by those ancient works. That interest began in the twelfth century, following the same impulse, essentially economic in character, to which the revived intellectual life of the time is to be referred.

While as yet the great industrial development of Florence was undreamed of, commerce had raised the neighboring Pisa to wealth and power. The little Arno in its sluggish lower course, afforded the shallow access to the mainland which the small craft of the time required, an access much prized on this seldom indented coast. Pisan architecture is a monument to both the wealth and the originality of the city at a time when no other city in Italy had been awakened from mediævalism. The extensive use of ancient materials in these buildings testifies also to a lively consciousness of the ancient art, of whose works in sculpture especially, this flourishing community seems to have been the earliest collector.

It is therefore appropriate that the revival of this art should have begun in Pisa. Niccolò Pisano (Nicholas of Pisa) is the acknowledged initiator of the movement. His work is most conveniently studied in his early masterpiece, the Pulpit of Pisa (B 379), an epoch-making work at which the tourist usually casts only a hasty glance on his way to do homage to that unfortunate tower which would be beautiful

B 379, Pulpit. Baptistery, Pisa. Niccolò Pisano, 1206?–1278?

if only it did not lean. The pulpit is a little hexagonal enclosure resting upon pillars which, in turn, rest upon the backs of lions, most unplausible and inartistic of suggestions, which seems to have entered Italy with the returning Crusaders, and to have been derived originally from so remote a people as the Hittites, where it doubtless had a significance that is lost to us. It is wholly in keeping with the weird fantasy of Asia, which forever separates its art from that of the West, by a great gulf that no man can cross. The arches that span these pillars are decorated with cusps which are unmistakably Gothic, though there is nothing beyond this superficial reminiscence to remind us that Italy was at this time beginning to feel the influence of that far-reaching art. The enclosure itself is made by an architectural framework with pillars at the corners and panels at the sides. Architecturally it is sound, though it cannot compare in grace of proportion with Greek work or even with some later constructions of the Renaissance. But it is the panels and their reliefs that interest us particularly. We may notice first the Visit of the Magi. The Madonna, quite unlike her former Byzantine self or the later conception of the Renaissance, is a queenly figure, imbued rather with beautiful strength than with tender sentiment. She wears the tiara or coronet which reminds us of the classic Juno but which does not recur in Christian art. Altogether, she is queenly and magnificent rather than distinctively Christian. The horses, with their exaggerated manes, the kneeling kings with their abundant curly hair, are elaborate, but ill-proportioned and exceedingly ill-draped. It is in this last feature that Niccolò especially shows his limitation. The draperies look like wooden boards nailed on. They are totally lacking in flexibility and texture, as well as in grace and harmony of line. Turning to another panel, the Presentation in the Temple, we see again the short, ill-proportioned figures, the heavy, bushy hair, the powerful, queenly Madonna, with little improvement in detail. Other

things for the moment puzzle us, as, for instance, the old man at the right, who seems to lean or half fall backward, his heavy weight supported by a slender youth who almost disappears beneath his elbow. We guess in vain for the significance of this figure.

But we have only to wander into the nearby enclosure of the wondrous Campo Santo to find our explanation. Here are ranged numerous sarcophagi and other antiques, most of which were there in Niccolò's time. On one is represented the myth of Hippolytos and Phædra, a moment's glance at which confirms Vasari's statement that the queenly Madonna we have noticed in Niccolò's pulpit was copied from this sarcophagus. Farther on is one of the large marble vases of which the Romans were so fond, decorated, as usual, with Greek myths copied from classical Greek works, and here is, strange to relate, a Bacchanal or ceremonial revel in which, along with the piper and the dancing menad, we see the drunken Silenus, congenial to Roman taste, whose obvious need of support explains the presence of the youth already mentioned. Niccolò has copied again, and this time with strange irrelevancy, for the helpless figure in the Presentation has no plausible explanation. Plainly Niccolò is interested in good figures wherever he sees them, and copying them, not very skillfully to be sure, he cannot resist the temptation to put them in wherever they will fit, irrespective of their significance.

The history of the Renaissance would be a sorry one if this process had continued, but it did not continue in the work of the later sculptors, nor even in the work of Niccolò himself, whose later works, though sometimes less judiciously planned than the Pulpit of Pisa, show an improvement in detail and a growing independence of classical models. The great pulpit at Siena is more ambitious and less well judged, particularly in the fact that the sculptor has run away with the architect, for where, in Pisa, little pillars were placed at the corners,

statues have been substituted in the larger work. It is all statues, a thing almost framed together out of human figures, and the panels crowded with vast numbers who are uncomfortable in their suggestion. But some of the best of these figures show a marvellous improvement in draperies. These are soft, flexible and graceful in a way that is surprising to one coming direct from the early work in Pisa. The artist is every inch a sculptor, not an architect or a sculptor decorator like the maker of the beautiful pulpit in Santa Croce. He has lost his sense of fitness, but he has devoted himself with unremitting zeal to the perfecting of his sculptor's technique.

Better still is the wonderful shrine of St. Dominic in Bologna (B 384) to which we shall have occasion later to refer, for it had the extraordinary fortune to be begun by the first sculptor of the Renaissance and finished by the last. This work of Niccolò Pisano remaining unfinished, was continued by a sculptor of the intermediate period, and finally finished by Michelangelo in his youth. It is second to no monument in Italy in its interest, and possibly in its beauty as well. How far Niccolò is responsible for this shrine it is hard to tell. The general conception of it is in keeping with the architecture of his time, its pinnacle being suggestive of the Gothic which was in vogue in his day. The one thing that we can attribute to him with certainty is the decoration upon the sarcophagus proper. Rows of figures are ranged around it in much the style of the Roman sarcophagi, a style not to be recommended, but having certain advantages merely as decoration. These figures are rather formal as they stand in measured rows, but what they lose in flexibility as a company of living beings, they gain in architectural suggestion. They make a good colonnade if not a good company of men. Incidentally they lack subtlety of countenance, but there is much of grace and charm about them all. Altogether, we shall go farther and often fare worse.

B 384, Tomb of St. Dominic. S. Domenico, Bologna.
Niccolò Pisano, 1206?–1278?

Niccolò was more than a sculptor. He was an organizer, a leader of men. There is abundant evidence that the creations with which his name is associated in Bologna, in Perugia, in Siena, in Pisa, were not the work of a single chisel. There was a company of which he was the undoubted master, which not only increased the volume of his output but better provided for the succession. There can be no question that Niccolò was very fruitful as the builder of a school.

His son and successor, Giovanni Pisano, is in some ways even more interesting, though his work is at first less attractive. In his there is no copying of the antique. His work would have been better and worse if he had copied. Oftentimes it is atrociously bad in detail, notably in the Crucifixion, a thoroughly representative work. There are mediæval mannerisms which are at first offensively prominent. The terrible anatomy of the crucified figures indicates how far art has to travel before a Michelangelo is possible. But we must beware of judging the fidelity and value of art simply or primarily by its skill. Giovanni's skill leaves much to be desired, but he has the fire of a true artist. There is in his work infinitely more of passion, earnestness and candor than in the work of Niccolò, and it is these things that count in the long run. He never tucks in a drunken Silenus because he is interested in the figure and has room for him. With him it is the idea that counts, and he is always true to it, no matter how helpless his grammar or his rhetoric. In a word, while Niccolò represents the first appearance of sculpture as a technic art, inviting the attention of those who have art's message, Giovanni is the first who in any large sense feels that message. Less classical, less skillful, he is more genuine. True art is always born of the life of the time. Never can it be produced by imitation, or by the resurrection of dead themes and vanished ideals. And with all the much-mooted influence of the classical, an influence which was assiduously encouraged by the great art patrons of the time, it is doubtful

whether that influence at any time contributed anything of value to the Renaissance. The art that we care for is not retrospective. It is the expression, oftentimes imperfect, even helpless, of the ideals and passions of the time.

It would be gratifying if we could assign to Giovanni Pisano, as a less critical age has done, the wonderful sculptures upon the façade of the Cathedral at Orvieto (B 400), but their authorship is and must forever remain doubtful. Their date, however, is approximately certain. Whoever executed them, they belong approximately to the period that we are considering. In their own way they are without a rival in the art of Italy. Unlike the works of Niccolò, they do not forget that their purpose is decoration. The great flat surfaces that they were called upon to beautify, are divided into compartments by a branching vine whose graceful lines and foliage are in themselves a masterpiece; not the slightest attempt at the irregularity of nature, no methodical scrolls like those of the Later Renaissance, merely a vine that twines in and out, always gracefully, to frame little spaces in which the artist is to execute the pictures in stone which the taste of the time demanded. And these pictures are inevitably the Bible story, or rather, tradition that has gathered round it, a story which was still young in art and had the invigorating freshness which these first vivid portrayals inevitably manifest. Detailed analysis is unnecessary. It is sufficient to note the great charm with which these figures, still wrongly proportioned, to be sure, but not the less vivid and real, perform their part in the stories assigned them, the exquisite delicacy of the draperies, the grace with which the angels move with outspread wings and folded feet. The charm is both that of sculpture and of decoration. Every figure and detail is beautifully executed and instinct with grace and loveliness, but the greater charm is in the placing of these figures and the setting. It is a case where the frame is not less beautiful and artistic than the picture. There are no

B 400, Pilaster at Extreme Left (Detail, Façade), Cathedral, Orvieto. Fourteenth Century.

more beautiful decorations in this first century of the Renaissance, possibly none even in the second.

It is significant that the first important work of sculpture in Florence also bears the name of Pisano, — this time Andrea Pisano, who was employed to make bronze doors for the great Baptistery which now needed embellishment on account of the imposing majesty of the new Cathedral opposite. The Baptistery is an octagonal building with doors on three sides. The front opening, that facing the Cathedral, was the one destined to receive these doors, wooden doors still closing the other openings.

Bronze doors were no new thing in Italy. We find them as far back as Imperial times. The old Baptistery of St. John in the Lateran contains doors which were taken from the Baths of Caracalla, in the shape of great flat slabs of bronze. Doubtless such doors were common in ancient times. They were without decoration, or at best — and there can be no better — they were decorated with inlaid patterns in silver. This latter art, which was an alternate, it would seem, to decoration in relief, seems to have continued in the Eastern Empire. We still have fragments of this superb art which perished with the looting of Constantinople. There is a pair of doors now religiously preserved in St. Paul's without the Walls at Rome, nearly destroyed by the great fire of a century ago, which show some feeble remains of this majestic art, an art employed by the Romans for the decoration of bronze in every possible connection; witness, for instance, the magnificent platform candelabrum in the Pompeian collection of the Museum at Naples. Other examples of this art are to be noted in the bronze doors of the Cathedral at Amalfi, and still other cathedrals in Southern Italy have doors thus decorated. All of them owe this decoration to the influence of Constantinople.

In the Western empire the alternate form of decoration seems to have triumphed. Relief cast in bronze was cer-

tainly of early date, but with the early devastation of Italy all such forms of art perished. Bronze was peculiarly sought on account of the value of the metal, and classical examples, it is needless to say, have not survived. The poverty of the devasted empire forced men to resort to the humbler wood for this purpose, and doors framed together in the usual fashion were universal. When wealth permitted they were sometimes covered with thin plates of bronze beaten out into figures in a rude form of repousée work. Such doors may now be seen in the church of San Zeno at Verona.

It was an easy step from this to the casting of plates with figures in relief to be attached to the wooden doors as before, and finally to the casting of solid doors, now governed in all their forms by ten centuries of tradition. The new bronze doors which were made in the tenth century, and again, be it noted, by a Pisan, one Bonanus by name, who seems to have worked all over Southern Italy and whose monuments are found in Pisa, Monreale, and elsewhere, revived the art of casting solid bronze doors, but in form they are framed together with rails, panels, nails, and moldings, as the wooden doors had been. It had become quite impossible for men to realize that a door was a door unless it was framed in this fashion. The great conflagration in the Cathedral of Pisa in the sixteenth century destroyed all but one of these doors of Bonanus, which now guards the east entrance usually entered by the visitor (M 1). It must be remembered that these doors antedate Niccolò Pisano and therefore are in no sense to be compared with works of the Renaissance. Their helplessness is further to be explained by the fact that they were cast, and that the artist in all his figures had to consider whether a mould could be made for this figure or not. Smooth rounded forms, with a minimum of under cutting, seemed indispensable, for the art of the bronze caster had not acquired that doubtful cleverness which now enables him to cast the most inappropriate forms. These doors furnish an excellent example

M 1, Bronze Doors, Twelfth Century, Cathedral, Pisa. Bonanus.

of the compromises of the early art. Not only are the figures exceedingly imperfect, mere signs for men, but all other things are confessedly so. The artist tries to make a man look like a man, without much success, to be sure, but with obvious intention. He does not even try to make a mountain look like a mountain or a temple look like a temple. These things he thinks of as too large for this purpose, being innocent, as indeed the bronze worker should be, of skill in perspective. Hence we find him quite as dependent upon the label of his picture as upon the picture itself. He is by no means sure that we can guess the meaning without the label, though the subject is appropriate enough. In the Temptation, for instance, the "exceeding high mountain" is the merest mole-hill and of impossible shape. Nearby stands the pinnacle of the temple, which is less than a doll's house in character. It is difficult for us to understand that the stories thus represented in visual symbols have an added freshness to the spectator. We are so familiar with more elaborate, realistic presentations that as we gaze upon these, our only impression is that of the grotesque. We think of them as caricatures, and laugh, where of old men stood in awe and went away with a feeling unknown before, that these persons and incidents were real. The visual aid to the mind, which serves the purpose of one age, is suggestive to another age only of inadequacy. The person who smiles at the art of Bonanus is voluntarily interposing a great gulf between himself and this age, which it should be his purpose to understand.

With only such models as these, Andrea went to work at the new doors which were to be for half a century the wonder of Florence, and to the end of time one of the masterpieces of the bronze worker's art. The doors, as a matter of course, are made upon the model of the framed wooden door. This model was not discarded in bronze until the twentieth century and then in but a single example. Each door has fourteen panels, square, and decorated within with a highly ornate and

rather complicated moulded outline suggestive of fine joiner's work. This leaves a quatrefoil panel with round, converging corners and diamond points on the four sides, in which must be inserted his pictorial representation. As every Baptistery is dedicated to John the Baptist, the natural, not to say inevitable theme was the story of his life. This occupies twenty of the twenty-eight panels, the remaining eight at the bottom being occupied by figures of the cardinal virtues.

It will be apparent at a glance that Andrea was confronted with a double problem. On the one hand he must tell these stories truthfully and in a manner to explain their meaning and suggest the appropriate sentiment. That is what we may call the problem of representation. It is the intellectual element in art, generally the first of which we are conscious, but not always the most important. The other problem is the decorative, how to make these figures or stories fit in the rather exacting space which the cabinet maker's tradition had imposed upon him. We have noticed in a former chapter the influence of the frame upon the arrangement of the picture. The fact that a picture must always have a certain balance, not to say symmetry, is due to the fact that it is placed in a symmetrical frame or setting, and the more conspicuous and elaborate this frame the more exacting it becomes. A square or oblong frame is the least noticeable, therefore the least exacting, a round frame far more so, and the frame that Andrea had chosen, more exacting even than the circle or any of the usual forms. To make his picture fit in these frames and seem to be in sympathy with their character, is a very different problem that cannot be separated from the latter. Both things must be thought about at once. And then, finally, there is the farther problem which has to do with the function of the doors. The doors are partitions whose purpose is to enclose a space. Their character as partitions must be respected in the artist's thought. This, again, is a principle of decoration, of adaptation with

which we have become familiar. To all these we must add the problem of his material, this bronze, uniform in color and therefore giving him nothing of the painter's means of expression. Moreover, it has to be cast, and the process and its limitations must be borne in mind and so considered that the spectator will forget it. An extremely complicated problem, and unnecessarily complicated in part by his own choice.

Andrea has solved this problem in a very simple way. It is questionable whether a more ambitious scheme would have produced better results. He does not pay so very much attention to the exacting frame that we have spoken of, but he is careful to use a comparatively small picture and have it fill only the center of the panel. He leaves the panel for the most part only a flat slab of bronze, which is what it ought to be, first and always. The artist should do nothing to make us forget that we are looking at a door, and a door ought to have a flat panel there precisely as the doors in our houses. These small scenes, located in the center of the panel, are comparatively out of reach of the curves and points of the frame and therefore relatively free from their dictation, but there are nice little touches of adaptation just the same. Take the Feast of Herod (B 395). The dainty way in which the skirt of Salome curves out behind suggests a consciousness of the large corner which is there to be filled and leaves it not quite so vacant. If the skirt dropped straight down and the picture came to a square corner there, it would be much less satisfactory. Other things of the sort may be traced through the whole. The artist shows a mild consciousness of this problem of decorative composition and is always true to it to the measure of his powers. That is about as far as it goes. He never has perspective. The buildings that it would occasionally be convenient to put into the background are in the same plane as the figures. Notice, for instance, the absurd size of the prison. Brought into the foreground and necessarily reduced to the scale of the figures in order to get

B 395, The Feast of Herod. The Beheading of John the Baptist.
South Doors, Baptistery, Florence. Andrea Pisano, 1270?–1348?

it into the picture at all, it becomes a mere symbol. It is a thing which a lusty prisoner could carry away on his back. But it is plain that this is a limitation. Sometimes the limitation is more apparent, as in the Baptism of Jesus, where he is supposed to be standing waist deep in the water. The artist finds it quite impossible to show us this river in perspective. He can do nothing more than represent a sort of crinkly effect round the legs of the Christ, which we recognize as symbolizing water, and take the will for the deed. Now it is not at all certain that Andrea would have done better to make a more ambitious attempt at picture. He would certainly have done better to have avoided this necessity, if he had been quite free to choose his themes, but unfortunately the only themes men cared for in this day were themes that only pictorial art could adequately express. So he accepts the theme, represents the wonderful figures in the foreground with great success and power, and then represents temples and other unmanageable things as mere hints or suggestions, funny to us but not in the least to men with only the tradition of Bonanus behind them. Their one thought was, not "How strange that he did not do better," but "How marvelous that he did so well!" And marvelous it certainly is. These doors, all things considered, have never been surpassed. There are perhaps better things to do, indeed, we would like to see some wealthy patron to-day revive the wonderful art of bronze inlaid with silver, flat surface, perfect in function, decorated with this supremely appropriate art. But, accepting the program of the Renaissance, with regard to which no one seems to have hesitated, it is an open question whether, with the themes that the age dictated to the artist, a better middle ground could have been found than that chosen by Andrea.

But we are interested or should be, most of all in the spirit of the man. In what way does he represent these stories? Let us not for a moment assume that they are so hackneyed

as to be of no consequence. They were so to the artist of two centuries later, but not to Andrea or to his age. They never are or can be, if they are to be the subject of true art. With what kind of feeling does he enshrine these themes?

We shall perhaps divine this best from such a scene as the Execution of John the Baptist. Here in front of the tiny prison is the Baptist, kneeling before his executioner, while two other soldiers stand by, witnesses of the act. The scene when realistically portrayed, as it would have been by a Rubens, for instance, is revoltingly brutal. The soldiers, properly conceived, must have been coarse and callous. How impossible it seems to represent such a theme in a way to appeal to our sympathies! Yet this must be done if the result is to be art. It is apparent at a glance that the artist has appreciated this necessity. The soldiers standing by bow their heads in an attitude that is expressive of sympathy and grief, unplausible, if you will, but infinitely grateful. They give the key note to the feeling which the artist would fain inspire in us. They are our representatives, our spokesmen, as it were, and the brutality of a decapitation is lost in the solemn pathos that attends the exodus of the great prophet. In like manner, the Feast of Herod, undramatic and mild, if you will, but dignified, is full of grace and charm. All indicates that our artist is refined and exquisite in his feeling, and that all that passes under his hand is transfigured by his refining touch.

Now this is not realism, it is true; but unmitigated realism, brutal where the reality is brutal, is not art. We shall study art to little purpose if we do not discover that its guiding star is not mere reality, but beauty; beauty, to be sure, in forms infinitely varied and sometimes in their austerity bordering on ugliness and pain, but beauty always. There is no end of truth which we contemplate with horror, and to which we are, and must forever remain, unreconciled. The mere representation of such truth will never make art

no matter how skillful. Our artist is deeply imbued with this principle, not as a theory but as an instinct as, in the case of the artist, it must be.

The visitor to Florence passes all too lightly this wonderful creation, bent on the quest for the more famous doors of Ghiberti. It is worth our while, however, to stop and muse for a moment on the impression that these doors must have produced on men who had never seen anything better than the doors of Bonanus at Pisa. The progress which they indicate is almost incredible. It is a progress in technical mastery, both of expression and of decorative arrangement. It is a progress in the direction of refinement and exquisiteness of sentiment. But the artist is still naïve and childlike. There are no astounding tricks of cleverness to arouse our wonder, and to divert our attention from the story and its spirit.

CHAPTER X

GHIBERTI, THE PAINTER IN BRONZE

For more than half a century, Andrea's doors remained the pride and glory of the Florentines. It was long ere they gathered force for a renewed effort, and then their concern seems to have been to find a man who could worthily duplicate the work of Andrea. It was under the strictest conditions of duplication in all essential particulars that they called upon the artists of Italy to compete for the privilege of making doors for the north entrance. They were to be framed in the same way, and to contain the same number of panels, with the same quatrefoil outline. A trial panel was to be the test, and that the comparison might be more easy and just, an identical subject was assigned to all, — Abraham's Sacrifice. Of the numerous panels presented in this competition, but two seem to have attracted much attention — those of Filippo Brunelleschi (later to be famous as the builder of the great dome of the Cathedral) and Lorenzo Ghiberti, known to us almost solely in this connection. These panels are now preserved in the National Museum of Florence. There is no better task that can be set the student of art than to imagine himself one of the Florentine commission appointed to consider the merits of these trial panels, and to decide which is best and why. We know the decision of the Florentines; we can only guess their reasons. There is some doubt whether their reasons were the same as ours. That their choice was the wise one, few will be found to dispute, but we are not so certain that the outcome was altogether what they expected.

In comparing these two panels let us again remember the

complicated nature of the problem. We have a story to tell whose incidents and spirit must be carefully considered. In turn, we have a space to fill, and a very exacting and peculiar space. And finally, we are making a door whose function must not be lost sight of. It is a partition, as we said before, movable but none the less functioning as such. We must keep it a screen, flat and impermeable in thought as in fact. And finally, we must remember that when it is open we are to pass by it, perhaps with draperies afloat, and that it must not be jagged or disagreeable to contact. Some of these considerations are very utilitarian; others subtle and idealistic; they are all important and are all appreciated in some degree even by the least analytical mind.

Our story is a highly dramatic one. It concerns Abraham, whose devotion and trust in God are in strange conflict with his paternal instincts. It concerns Isaac, himself to be sacrificed, and naturally unreconciled to the course of events. It concerns Jehovah and his messenger, the Angel. And finally, there are servants mentioned in the story, but obviously and necessarily excluded from full participation in the councils of their master. The ass and the ram play subordinate but essential parts in the story. The physical setting and the problem which it involves we have already mentioned.

Beginning with the decorative problem, let us see how our artist has arranged his picture and filled his space. And here it must be remembered that in considering the problem of decoration we do not want to think too much about persons. It makes little difference whether we are dealing with persons or things. The problem of filling the space is a problem of arranging the prominent masses which reflect the light more strongly to the eye, — the high-lights, as they are appropriately called. They may be rocks, or trees, or persons. It is with these elements that we must build our picture, create our lights, and fill our space.

(B 416) Turning to Ghiberti's panel we notice one great ridge or mass, perhaps unpleasantly prominent, in the shape of the rocks which, beginning in the upper left hand corner, sweep in a general direction to the right, then curve downward and then again curve to the right. They constitute a sort of diagonal from upper left to lower right, not in a straight line but in a shallow, sinuous curve. This mass of rocks is the backbone of the picture. The next mass or line we shall find in the body of Abraham. It makes connection in the lower right-hand corner with the mass already described. If we begin there and move upward we shall see that it branches off from this great diagonal and, sweeping in a perfect curve, moves upward and then, ignoring a trifling break, passes on into the figure of the Angel in the upper right-hand corner. This superb curve that is thus thrown to the right of the picture is unmistakably intentional, the more so as but for the necessity of this curve, the figure of Abraham would almost certainly have been differently posed. The artist has strained a point to give this curve. This, therefore, is our second composition line. Passing now to the other end of our diagonal, we see, making close connections with it and dropping downward, the figures of the servants, notably the one on the left. This figure is not so curved as that of Abraham, but the harmony of line is preserved by the very accommodating way in which, as we get near the lower corner, he puts one foot out behind. In a general way, therefore, we have a line similar to the one we have just described on the right, though curving less, and crowded more up toward the frame. So far we have three lines, and they constitute a flowing letter N admirably adapted to this space. But this letter N is crowded to the left simply to make room for another figure — that of Isaac. Here again the artist carefully disposes the figure in such way as to repeat the great curve spoken of in the right center. This, as it were, echoes this great line of the composition, a very characteristic method which we shall find in all Ghiberti's work.

B 416, The Sacrifice of Abraham (Competitive Panel).
Bargello, Florence.
Ghiberti, 1378–1455.

Having noted these main lines, it will be interesting to note how carefully the artist avoids anything like contradictory lines. For instance, this theme permitted plenty of straight lines and angles, but Ghiberti will have none of them. The altar line offers a short straight horizontal which is extremely subdued, but in the donkey which, in the other panel, offers the straight line of his back, the back is obscured behind the figures of the two servants, lest that straight line should show, and he turns his head lazily to the right, thus throwing his neck into a long curve perfectly harmonious with the greater curves we have mentioned. All the minutest details of this picture have been carefully considered in this way. Curves large and small are everywhere, straight lines nowhere, angles positively excluded.

It is interesting to notice also the way in which the artist fills his space. The lower corners are filled moderately full, as the lower part of a picture always should be, while the upper part is less crowded, and yet all the larger spaces, that is, the corners, are carefully filled and filled with matter that is relevant to the story, the ram occupying the upper left hand corner as he quietly rests upon the projecting cliff, and the angel filling the corner to the right. But the little points the artist for the most part leaves unfilled. They are too small to require such attention, and any effort made to fill them would be apt to call attention to their existence, and so to the frame, as such. They can safely and wisely be ignored.

(B 429) Turning now to Brunelleschi's picture, let us seek again a main line or mass. It is difficult to pick out any one that is intentionally prominent. We can hardly do better than to take the figure of Abraham which is drawn in a straight, semi-diagonal line from the upper center to the lower right-hand corner. The other figures or masses form a confused set of short and jerky lines interspersed with angles. It is impossible to find in this confusion the hint of a pattern, nor is the frame very satisfactorily filled. The lower corners are

B 429, The Sacrifice of Abraham (Competitive Panel).
Bargello, Florence.
Filippo Brunelleschi, 1377–1446.

filled too full, the figures are crowded out of the space and lap over and obscure the frame, a most unfortunate feature. The upper left-hand corner is occupied by the Angel, and again seems inadequate for the purpose, though here it is the angel rather than the frame that suffers. The upper right-hand corner is less filled and unfortunately is arbitrarily filled, a tree with no especial meaning, being requisitioned for the purpose and attached to the story by a rather gratuitous flip of Abraham's drapery. The drapery is farther called upon to fill minutely and very arbitrarily the little diamond point to the right. It is plain that the decorative problem was much better solved by Ghiberti than by Brunelleschi, and it is doubtful if the latter thought about that problem at all. It is probable that Ghiberti thought about it too much, but we may be perfectly certain that Ghiberti is thinking about it, and that the arrangement we have spoken of is not accidental. Proof of this will soon be forthcoming.

One thing more needs to be noted before we turn to the intellectual or dramatic side of our problem. There is a hint in Ghiberti's work of distant background, that is, perspective. The little ledge on which the ram is resting seems to extend a good way back. What makes it seem so we will notice later, but it is difficult to avoid that impression. It is unmistakable, too, that the angel is coming in from the background in order to avoid the very unfortunate cramping of limbs and drapery which we see in Brunelleschi's angel, who comes in plainly from the left and in the same plane with the other figures. We cannot avoid the impression that Ghiberti is reaching furtively into that background of which Brunelleschi has made no use, and we know what that means. The decoration, before we know it, will grow into a picture, if that tendency is to be indulged. We must watch for it as we go on.

Dropping these problems of decoration, which of the men

has told the story most forcefully and satisfactorily? We can see at a glance that in Brunelleschi's work there is a vehemence which Ghiberti does not manifest, and which in a way is highly appropriate. If a father were called upon to sacrifice his own son, we cannot help thinking that it would take a tremendous brace, mental and physical, on his part, and such a brace is suggested infinitely more by Brunelleschi's rigid and angular Abraham than by the curving figure that Ghiberti has represented. Is it conceivable that a man standing as Ghiberti's Abraham does, would ever be capable of such an act? This vehemence is manifest throughout. The angel, for instance, who in Ghiberti's panel comes in majestically and quietly from the background and stays the action with the divine message, in Brunelleschi's panel rushes in at a later moment and incontinently grasps the patriarch by the arm and that not a moment too soon, for the knife is already upon Isaac's throat. The attitude of Isaac, too, is far more suggestive of the struggle of both father and son than the serene, classical figure of Ghiberti.

The same spirit is carried into unnecessary detail. Of the servants, one is pulling a thorn out of his foot while the other is dipping up water to drink, and the donkey, with ears laid back and vicious switch of his tail, is disputing his right to the stream. Even the ram, instead of resting quietly, is scratching his head with his hind foot. There is a nervous activity of body and mind in Brunelleschi's work that needlessly complicates a scene in whose central theme his vehement intensity is appropriate.

Now, to sum up our analysis. Brunelleschi is a realist who is thinking only of the action. He is a realist, perhaps we must add, who is not even thinking of the beautiful side of the action. To make it intense, vehement, truthful, even brutally truthful, is his care. That type of realism has been frequent enough in the history of art, but it was uncongenial to the Florentines and has never been productive of art

of a high order. Ghiberti, on the other hand, cares little about historic verities. He has not entered very deeply into the spirit of his story, not quite deeply enough, perhaps, but he thinks a great deal about his quatrefoil pattern, about the grace of his figures, preferring curves, with their inevitable suggestion, to straight lines and angles which are servants to another order of ideas. He is primarily a decorator and an apostle of grace.

Ghiberti received the commission, to the disgust of Brunelleschi, whose disappointment deepened ultimately into intense antipathy for his successful rival, an antipathy which was later to influence profoundly the destiny of another great sculptor whom he chose as his protégé. But whether the Florentines recognized in these panels the qualities that we have mentioned is not so clear. There was a tremendous bias in Florence at this time in favor of the classical, a word ill-defined but bearing with it something of that magical reminiscence of the Greek, which was the object of devout if not of intelligent worship. It is an open question whether the classical figure of Isaac in Ghiberti's panel did not influence them more than anything else. If so, they were deceived, for we never find a classical figure in Ghiberti's work afterward, scarce even the nude, so inseparable in the thought of the time from the ancient art.

(B 418) But Ghiberti's opportunity was before him and he made use of it with a singleness of purpose that is without a parallel. Twenty-one years were devoted to the great doors in question, little interrupted by other work, and these doors once in place were adjudged not only the equal of Andrea's but their superior, a false judgment, perhaps, but perfectly in line with the taste of the time. So complete was Ghiberti's triumph that these doors once placed in the north entrance, it was decided to remove Andrea's from their place of honor, and to place them in the south entrance, where they would perfectly match the doors of Ghiberti, and then to have Ghiberti

B 418, Christ Bearing the Cross. The Crucifixion.
North Doors, Baptistery, Florence. Ghiberti, 1378–1455.

make another pair of doors for the front entrance, giving him thus the supreme honor, and freedom to fashion them as he would. Upon these doors he spent twenty-eight years — forty-nine years in all. Seldom has a life been so concentrated, and seldom has concentration been so justified.

Turning briefly to Ghiberti's earlier doors, we note their similarity to the doors of Andrea, but with this important difference, that the panels are for the most part more crowded, more detailed and more ambitiously pictorial. The relief is higher and the panel surface much more obscured. It is plain that Ghiberti is thus confronted with a problem of decorative adaptation in an intenser form. He has not evaded it as Andrea did in part.

In the upper left hand door are two panels, the significance of which it is impossible to over-estimate. One represents the Bearing of the Cross and the other a companion panel, the Crucifixion. Beginning with the latter, we note in the center (and it must be remembered that we have the same quatrefoil frame as before) the cross with the figure of Christ. On either side hovers a mourning angel while below sit two figures, one with upturned face, the other with bowed head, mourners at the foot of the cross. Nothing could be more simple, and yet upon this Ghiberti has exhausted the possibilities of decorative art. In line composition it so far transcends the trial panel, that if this were a consideration on the part of his judges their expectations were more than met.

The things which we are about to note are so remote from our thought in the ordinary contemplation of art that they may easily seem fantastic. They are, on the contrary, constantly present in our feeling. If we like a picture, it is in part, though all unconsciously, because of the things that are here so prominent. We do not know that we like it for that reason. We are very far from analyzing all our feelings. To illustrate, let us take a poem of which we are very fond. We admire it because of the sentiment expressed, so we think,

and in part this is true, but let us transpose the words so that we break the meter and destroy the rhyme, inserting a synonym occasionally for the purpose, and then read it. We have not changed the sentiment in the slightest degree, but we have nearly or quite destroyed its value as art. Then for the first time we realize that we are dependent in part upon the rhyme and the meter, yet these were but incidental elements; they add nothing to the thought. If now we take the same poem and set it to music and it is acceptably sung by a beautiful voice, we get a farther addition to our feeling. Read the words of a song and we get nothing like the same effect, but again the intellectual element remains unchanged. No, it is the very function of art to transmit a given intellectual content, transfigured by these sensuous elements, rhyme, meter and melody in poetry and song, color and melody of line in picture, and so on with the rest. We do not analyze these elements; we feel them just the same.

Now, Ghiberti has taken a very simple story, familiar to the humblest of his audience, and has set it to magnificent music, modifying it, of course, somewhat for the purpose. The rhyme, meter and melody may be traced something as follows: First, the figure on the cross is modified noticeably but necessarily. A figure so suspended would draw the arms straight and taut and these thus drawn would form, as oftentimes they do in art, with the cross piece of the cross, a triangle. But Ghiberti's music is of the kind that excludes the straight line and angle, so the arms are thrown into a curve which changes the whole spirit of the piece. Then the drapery of the angel on the right makes perfect connection with the curve of the quatrefoil frame, continuing that curve on a shortening radius so that the figure seems to be the beginning of a scroll. The angel's wing, in turn is a precisely similar curve, but in the opposite direction, an opposite curve, each emphasizing the other. On the other side, the angel makes very different connection with the frame, but

connection still. It is not the continuance of a simple curve, — Ghiberti seems never to offset two identical curves, — but this time it is a reverse curve, a sinuous curve, such a one as we saw at the outset in the rocks of Ghiberti's trial panel. That line is Ghiberti's sign manual, just as distinct in his art as the round or angular hand by which we characterize a man's handwriting. Every artist has such a "hand," that is, a distinctive stroke by which we can detect his work. The wing of this angel which seems so perfectly to match the one on the other side is, after all, quite differently placed, and this time it repeats the curve of the drapery instead of reversing it.

Let us drop now to the lower part of the composition. The figure in the left with bowed head is curled up in the round corner of the frame. At the right below, the figure touches the frame and then swings around in a curve quite similar to that of the frame but departing farther and farther from it. This is one of the most frequent and fundamental lines in curvilinear composition, — a tangential curve. On the other side we have a different curve, the long draperies of the figure, quite unnecessary for other purposes, being required to give us this compound curve which we have noticed in the angel on the left. It is impossible too greatly to admire the skill with which the artist has built his scene with these few simple lines, disposing them always with reference to the frame yet never with mechanical repetition; simplicity itself yet the very perfection of sculptural music, like some supremely beautiful masterpiece of the great composers, inimitable in its beautiful simplicity.

The one thing to be noted in this is that it is not merely a pretty design, but that in the design the very qualities that we have considered are necessary to the *spiritual* effect. This is one of the most affecting representations of the Crucifixion that we have, but the sentiment and the tender pathos with which it is suffused are due not to any represen-

tation of face, nor yet to dramatic attitude. They are due simply to this rhythm and melody with which the artist has suffused his composition. This may perhaps be accounted the greatest masterpiece of the Renaissance in the field of linear design adapted to the purpose of spiritual expression.

The adjacent panel is different from it in almost every particular. There is no such obvious pattern or design. The composition is full of delicate curves, but they are subordinate to another purpose. That purpose is suggested by the architecture in the background. We see without difficulty that this is a city gate through which the great procession has emerged, but the important thing to note is that it is in the background. It looks some distance away, and we have no difficulty in assuming that it is of large proportions. It does not crowd up into the foreground like the prison in Andrea's panel. And out of this vast background thus suggested comes this troop, easily thought of as limitless, but actually containing only a few figures. These figures seem more numerous because they pass from distinctness to vagueness and we partially lose sight of the last ones, thus easily assuming that there are more beyond which we have lost sight of altogether. This familiar suggestive device is a commonplace of the painter's art.

But it will be apparent at a glance that, having a background like this with things near and far, it is not easy to make a pattern composition like that of the Crucifixion. Such compositions need to be in a single plane — such at least was the feeling of the early Renaissance. When more than one plane is used it is like putting up a series of iron gratings of different pattern, one behind the other. They simply spoil one another. It required the ingenuity of Raphael to solve this more intricate problem. Ghiberti simply gives up this attempt when he ventures upon the other. The composition is a satisfactory one from the pictorial standpoint, but it is not in the least like the other.

Here then we have two utterly contrasted principles. In the one panel we have no background but a beautiful decorative pattern, studied with reference to the surrounding frame and suited at once to decorative and spiritual purposes. In the other we have deep background and a composition, pictorial rather than decorative, and in many planes, but the pattern effect is not attempted.

Picture or decorative pattern? Which shall it be? Either may serve the spiritual purpose, may convey the spiritual message. Which, then, is best suited to the purpose of the door? There can be but one answer, the answer which the thoughtful student has always given, though ambitious art and admiration of skill have as continually obscured the principle. The decorative pattern is the appropriate thing for a door and for a panel in itself highly decorative. Ghiberti stands at the parting of the ways. He may develop either principle. We hope he will develop the decorative. He did develop the pictorial. Even in these first doors the pictorial largely predominates. There are no other panels like the Crucifixion, though there are others embodying much of the same principle.

(B 420, B 422, B 423, B 424) As we turn to the later doors, all changes. It is impossible to contemplate these immortal creations with a feeling of unsympathetic criticism. It is with difficulty that we keep our heads from being turned. Ghiberti, now wholly free, has flung out the quatrefoil pattern with its severe limitation upon pictorial freedom. The twenty-eight panels give way to ten, much larger and more readily used. Splendid decorations now enrich the massive frames of the square panels in which, with the least exacting of settings, he is free to indulge his pictorial instincts. In all Florentine art there is nothing more wonderful than these pictures, for pictures let us frankly call them. Distinctly the most wonderful thing about them is their perspective, which is always present. Even in so simple a panel as the Blessing of Jacob, it is easy

B 420, East Doors, Baptistery, Florence. Ghiberti, 1378–1455.

B 422, The Story of Abraham (Fourth Panel).
East Doors, Baptistery, Florence.
Ghiberti, 1378–1455.

B 423, Isaac and his Sons (Fifth Panel).
East Doors, Baptistery, Florence.
Ghiberti, 1378–1455.

B 424, David and Goliath (Ninth Panel).
East Doors, Baptistery, Florence.
Ghiberti, 1378–1455.

to make out six or seven different planes, the figures being graduated in size and distinctness in a way to make the illusion perfect. In others, like the Taking of Jericho, where the city stretches off, miles and miles away, the perspective is bewilderingly perfect.

Let us inquire for a moment as to the means by which this impression of distance is secured. We recall that the Florentines knew substantially only linear perspective. They were conscious of the meaning of converging lines, but that more important perspective suitable for out of door relations, that atmospheric perspective depending upon color and haze, was discovered by Masaccio alone. Upon his work the later painters gazed admiring and mystified. They never caught its secret. Yet, astounding to relate, Ghiberti seems to have caught it, for the perspective we have here is decidedly atmospheric rather than linear. It is not by convergence of lines or size that we get the impression. We never have it more than when we look upon the city of Jericho where size is no safe guide. No, Ghiberti, denied the use of color, so indispensable to the painter's purpose, merely by lowering his relief and dimming his outlines, building upon the single fact of nature's obliterating haze, gives us with magical certainty that impression of distance which is usually the painter's prerogative. If our standard of judgment is simple skill, then this is the greatest pictorial art that Florence ever produced. That of course is not our standard.

But there is much more than perspective. There is a tender grace and sympathy in these creations which is ineffable. Take the individuals, and notice the meaning of their attitudes, the bowed figure of Isaac as he commissions Esau to get him the venison, it is suggestive of a gentle dignity from which the artist never far departs; or again, the three angels, listeners to Abraham's petition, it is impossible to doubt the result of a prayer so fervent and addressed to beings so benignant. Even the least significant

of the figures bear about with them a grace that in itself is a sufficient reason for existence. We must not for a moment imagine that this grace is idle or irrelevant. It is in this grace, which is of the spirit more than of the flesh, that we find the keynote to Ghiberti's spiritual interpretation of his theme. We do not feel the passions that momentarily master the personalities in these varying scenes. Indeed, it must be admitted that from first to last he shows nothing of the vehement realism of Brunelleschi or the grander dramatic power of Donatello. His stories are all set to melody of a single kind, written in music of a single key, but such melody and such music that the most dogmatic devotee of realism feels little disposed to contest their claim to his homage.

It is interesting to note, too, the refining and deepening of this spiritual suggestion which has come to Ghiberti with the years. In one of the panels of these later doors, — the one in which Abraham pleads with the angels, — Ghiberti again represents Abraham's sacrifice. It is in the background now, but if we compare it with the first we shall be amazed at the change which the years have wrought. There is nothing materialistic here. Abraham does not pose in arbitrary curves and fix his attention solely upon his awful act; but, with an upturned face that is full of indescribable emotion, he welcomes the divine messenger who relieves him of this terrible necessity. Transfigured at every point, this is the art full grown which was prophesied in Ghiberti's panel.

This is not the thing to do in bronze. Ghiberti is not a sculptor, he is a painter in bronze. He has not the resources of the painter, but he makes up for the lack by more than the painter's skill. In conception, in transfiguring sympathy, his work is above all praise. He has chosen merely to express a supreme artistic inspiration in an abnormal manner. The bronze worker should not paint; he should not, with

half resources, venture into the painter's field and strive for those effects of perspective which are appropriate to the painter's medium. Why not? Simply because that is not the line of least resistance, and the line of least resistance is always the line of greatest potential achievement. That Ghiberti overcame insuperable obstacles does not alter the principle. The artist should play from his long suit. So will he accomplish most.

But recognizing this principle, conceding that it is folly and mischief to ignore it, let us remember another principle which alone can give our criticism measure and ultimate meaning. The essential thing in art is, after all, not medium or manner. It is inspiration and spirit. Ghiberti violates the canons of his technique, but he is true to the heavenly vision. It is easy to say that this is not bronze. It is infinitely more important to say that this is, after all, art. It behooves us to remember that a later and greater than he once stood before those gates, seeing in them a violation of the rules to which he held most firmly, a man who never praised unless praise was inevitable, who criticized freely where criticism was due, and yet Michelangelo said, "These should be the gates of Paradise!"

CHAPTER XI

THE NEW SCIENCE

WHILE Ghiberti was accomplishing the impossible as a painter in bronze, another sculptor, destined to exert a far greater influence upon Florentine sculpture, was working out the sculptor's problem in a more normal manner. Donatello can never be long dissociated in thought from Ghiberti. At the time that the commission was granted for the making of the great doors, Donatello was still a youth in his teens. But for that, Ghiberti might have had a competitor that would have changed the history of Florentine art. He arrived on the scene a little too late, and just in time to be taken up by the disappointed Brunelleschi and pushed vigorously to the fore. Few men who have wrought at the same art, side by side, have differed more than Ghiberti and Donatello. Nor does the older sculptor seem to have been at all influenced by the younger, as was natural both on account of the difference in age and the extreme concentration of Ghiberti's work. The influence upon the younger sculptor, in turn, was certainly not one of sympathetic imitation, yet Donatello's whole lifetime is explicable only with Ghiberti in the background of our thought.

We can best understand the contrast between the two men by comparing Ghiberti's St. Stephen (B 425), one of the few full sized statues which he produced, with Donatello's St. George (B 434). Both were decorations of that strangest of Florentine churches, Or San Michele, and on opposite sides of the same corner so that the observer passes from the one to the other with an interval of but a few steps. It is clear from our study thus far that Ghiberti was not primarily a

B 425, St. Stephen. Or San Michele, Florence.
Ghiberti, 1378–1455.

B 434, St. George. Bargello, Florence. Donatello, 1386–1466.

maker of statues. We have called him a painter in bronze. How little his peculiar talent was suited to expression in full sized statues will be apparent from this example. We must recall briefly the character of St. Stephen, one of the most daring of the figures that stalk across the stage of the early Church. The Church was peaceable enough up to his time. It had won the easy tolerance of the unsympathetic, and was rapidly passing into harmless oblivion, when Stephen adopted an aggressive campaign and began arguing his case in the synagogues. He decidedly carried the war into Africa, with the result that might be expected. Brought up for trial before the Sanhedrin on the convenient charge of blasphemy, he is given a chance to state his case and begins with a long account of the history of the Hebrew people, which suddenly ends as he observes the hopelessness of his plea, with the sweeping condemnation, "Oh, Uncircumcised in heart and ears! Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost! As your fathers did, so also do ye!" We all remember the result. Perhaps we have appreciated too little the daring character of this youthful saint. Certainly Ghiberti has failed to express it. The long, sweeping curves that he loves so well are not suited to the expression of aggressive self-assertion. The face is gentle, not to say timid. It is a figure instinct with grace but utterly lacking in the great qualities of St. Stephen.

Turning to Donatello's statue we have precisely the character which Ghiberti missed. Notice the poise, the weight borne upon the right foot, throwing the body well forward as though for aggression. How different would be the attitude if he fell back upon the other foot. He is on the aggressive, not the defensive. The eyes gaze with piercing intensity, emphasized by the knit eyebrow. The costume has no long folds that flow off into gentle curves, but is short and trim for action. His shield, with its rigid, straight lines, emphasizes the spiritual temper of the whole. It is the

incarnation of virile young manhood, in its way a perfect thing. It is not decoration; it is not pretty; it is better than either — the beautiful expression of an eternally beautiful thing. Such is Donatello as we know him in his youth. A number of works, which we may conveniently group as of the first period, manifest this same character. Closely akin is the beautiful Annunciation carved in grey stone in Santa Croce. The Virgin here is first cousin to the St. George, splendid in wholesomeness and youthful strength. Still another we must account the beautiful terra cotta bust of St. Lawrence (B. 446) in the church of San Lorenzo, Florence. It is doubtful whether Florence has ever given us a finer example of manliness and candor. The upturned head is confident and frank but not unpleasantly defiant. The garment is realistically rather than decoratively treated. It is perfect realism, but, after all, realism which shows a marked preference for the things that are really beautiful. As we gaze upon these works, to which we may add the St. Mark of Or San Michele, praised by Michelangelo, and perhaps other works, it is difficult to exaggerate the wholesomeness and fundamental character of the new sculptor's art. His interest is in character, not in clothes. He is giving us prose, if you will, rather than melodious poetry, but it is a grand and noble prose such as many will prefer to lyric verse.

But as we go farther, it is clear that our artist's emphasis shifts. Take, for instance, the marble statue of St. John which is often spoken of as one of his masterpieces. A masterpiece it certainly is in a way. The artist has made a painstaking study of this lean and haggard youth, such a study as Ghiberti never made or was tempted to make. Plainly it interests him, but unless we are in the atmosphere of the studio it is a study which we shall not enjoy. Donatello has chosen this subject, not because it is beautiful or inspiring, but because, delving ever more deeply into the fundamentals of his craft, he is interested in mastering more completely

B 446, St. Lawrence. Sacristy, S. Lorenzo, Florence.
Donatello, 1386–1467.

the anatomy of the human figure, and that in different forms. The comely draped figure of St. George or of the Virgin of the Annunciation he has handled well enough, but he realizes that there are more difficult problems and has chosen the half nude ascetic for that reason. One writer speaks of this as one of the most beautiful nudes of the Renaissance. With all deference, we beg to differ. One of the most masterly, if you will; one of the most interesting; anything but the most beautiful. Let us not pervert the wholesome instincts of mankind. Rude and ungainly figures like this are not beautiful. They may be beautifully portrayed, and if portrayal, that is, the problem of craftsmanship, absorbs all our thought, then in a sense this achievement may be beautiful, but the beauty is technical, not natural or human. We must be on our guard against the technical bias in the study of art. We are reminded of the enthusiast who described the advantages of a certain medical school, with "its learned faculty, its great plant, and its magnificent hospitals with their *treasures of disease*," all of it explicable enough, but implying a point of view which it is neither possible nor desirable that the layman should take. Donatello is getting interested in the study of anatomy, and has chosen an unbeautiful figure for the opportunity it offers.

But we shall go farther and fare worse. It was in this middle period that Donatello, already famed for his early work, was commissioned to prepare statues for the great Campanile which goes by Giotto's name. His bias at this period is best indicated by the so-called King David (B 438). It is with astonishment that we look upon the figure that bears this name, an astonishment which has led some to doubt whether the name was intended. The guess has been hazarded that the statue was put in a niche formerly occupied by another statue, and that the name was a holdover. But to have permitted the name was equivalent to having adopted it, and Donatello must certainly be held responsible for the

B 438, King David (Il Zuccone).
Campanile del Duomo, Florence.
Donatello, 1386–1466.

name in the one sense or the other. Nor is it difficult to see that the name might express his mood. Why should a figure so uncouth, the very quintessence of the ugly, have been fashioned to represent this much-beloved king?

The answer becomes plain if we remember our background — Ghiberti, and his hold upon the affections of the Florentines; for it must be remembered that in these two very different developments of sculpture the Florentines, at the time, unquestionably cast in their lot with Ghiberti. And to a man interested in the study of the nude, in the mastering of the difficult problem of the human figure, to a man essentially a sculptor of statues and not of decorations, essentially realistic rather than poetical, Ghiberti was an influence both pernicious and seductive. Ghiberti, as we have seen in the case of St. Stephen, cares little or nothing for the historic verities, and now that we recall it, the great doors are full of like deviations from truth. Take the panel in which Isaac gives his blessing to Jacob. In the center of the picture is the youthful Esau receiving the commission to go and get the venison. Esau is described to us as a hairy savage born out of due season, in everything suggestive of the uncouth, yet here he is represented with the court dress and curly locks of a page of the Medici, graceful and charming but about as little of an Esau as we could possibly imagine. Now to Donatello, all this prettifying tendency of Ghiberti was rank heresy. We need not withhold our admiration from Ghiberti if we admit that there was some ground for his feeling. Art is not mere truth-telling, but it can never ignore the truth with impunity. It is not mere truth-telling, but in all its telling there must be truth, and in Ghiberti's art that truth was often lacking. This gulf between the two temperaments would have been less deep, however, had it not been that circumstances intensified the contrast. On the one hand was Brunelleschi, continually irritated by Ghiberti, with whom he was unfortunately associated in a most inap-

propriate art commission in the pay of the Florentine state. His influence cannot have been otherwise than disparaging to Ghiberti, and, by so much, encouraging to Donatello to go to extremes in opposition. Brunelleschi, it will be remembered, was savagely truthful, nervous and irascible, as manifested in every line of his work. He cared little for the grace which Donatello's realism might sacrifice. And to this must be added the still more important fact that these two men, confident in the rightness of their cause, saw the Florentines following their rival. There is food for thought in Donatello's remark long after. He had forsaken Florence for a time and worked in Padua. When he at last set out to return, he was begged by the Paduans to remain, but replied, "No, you are spoiling me. I must go back to Florence, where men find fault."

It is impossible to believe that Florence did not welcome such a work as the St. George, but it is easy to understand that they may have raved over it much less than over the doors of Ghiberti, and yet to Donatello and Brunelleschi it seemed worthy of an infinitely higher place. The result was that Donatello leaned to the opposite extreme, insisting that the correct rendering of fact was fundamental in art, and beyond doubt exaggerating this principle, he fell into the pitfall which continually besets the realist.

The realist continually protests against the idealist that he tells but a part of the truth, that he picks out pretty things and leaves the great world of interesting fact unexpressed; he should tell truth impartially; and insisting upon this program he inevitably emphasizes the omissions. Certain things have been excluded from the beauty lover's program as being uncomely and unfit. The realist will have none of this, and so espouses their cause. Before he is done he has all unconsciously become the special pleader of the ugly. Witness a Zola in literature. Realism has thus become associated in the popular mind with the unsightly and the

unclean. Following this perfectly natural line of development, Donatello rapidly becomes the exponent of ugliness in art. We can imagine his defence of the King David when asked if that was his idea of the king. How easy his sneering reply: "Oh, yes, I know what you want. You want a pretty man with a crown on his head and clad in ermine, and on his throne! Kingship to you inheres in paraphernalia. Is there not kingship in character? Do you imagine that David was merely a king and not also a person? Do you think he always wore his crown? Can you not imagine him making himself comfortable about the house, nonchalant and negligé? Was there not back of all outward symbols a personality, and that perhaps with its idiosyncrasies and unbeautiful traits?" In some such way Donatello must have reasoned. The effort is to get away from the superficial and the emasculating tendency, to the fundamental, careless for the time being whether it be beautiful or not.

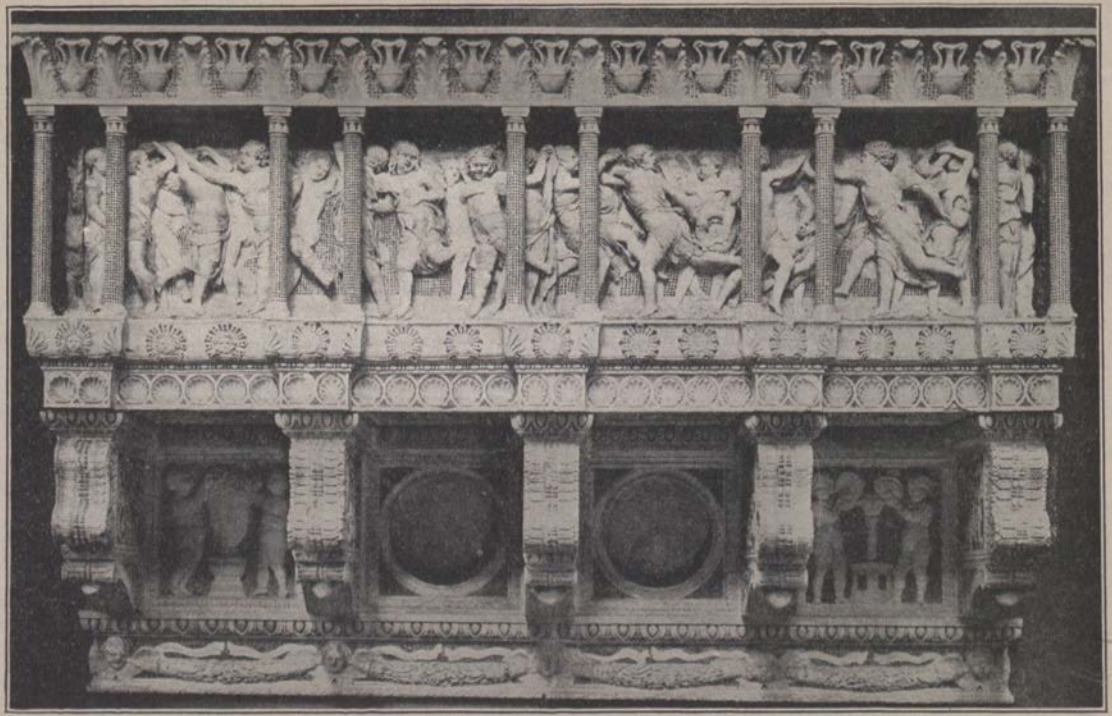
Now the tendency just in this form does not give us art. The King David is a masterpiece of study and of modeling. The arm is magnificent, the hand that reaches under the leathern thong, the drapery that defiantly refuses to conform to any scheme of decorative arrangement — all this is a masterly study, but it is not beautiful, it is not inspiring, it is not in any great sense significant. It is not art; it is merely sculpture, a study from the life class dubbed King David in defiance. The study is valuable, the reaction against Ghibertiism is wholesome, but it is a tendency contributing to art, rather than art itself. Michelangelo was infinitely closer to Donatello than to Ghiberti, but Michelangelo never would have made this King David.

Unfortunately, the tendency does not stop here. The St. John in the Baptistery in Siena, and above all, the impossible Magdalen in the Baptistery at Florence, show to what abysmal depths of ugliness Donatello's reaction descended. In this, all his earlier feeling for youthful beauty, as we see

it in the St. Lawrence or the St. George, was utterly lost. The charm of childhood, which none understood better than he, the comeliness of youth and manly strength — these things were lost never to return.

But fortunately this is not Donatello's last word. Still a third period is to be noted — one of abundant ugliness, to be sure, but no longer of ugliness for ugliness' sake. In it there are some of the grander elements of that larger art of which Ghiberti never dreamed and which holds the promise of Michelangelo. He turns from a study of anatomy and meaningless detail to the study of emotion and feeling. It is no longer the human body; that, once mastered, becomes merely incidental to a larger purpose, and that larger purpose is life, with its varied action and feeling, as an interpreter of character.

To this period we may assign the lovely pulpit of Prato and the far-famed Singing Gallery (B 439), once in the Duomo of Florence and now in its near-by Museum. With infinite sprightliness these dancing genii race across the scene of action, not beautiful, it must be confessed, their faces, however vivacious, are totally without comeliness of feature, but there is an infinite vitality to their movement which in itself is a theme of beauty. We can imagine a dancer fascinating us with rhythmic movements who would not fascinate us for a moment by beauty of face. In turning to this larger theme Donatello seems to have outgrown the spirit of prejudice, perhaps because he outlived the period of Ghiberti worship. Absorbed in this new and larger theme where art deals with a beauty that is more than of figure or face, he again becomes an artist. Familiar as we are with incident in the work of Ghiberti, there is in his work nothing of the magnificent vitality and energy which characterizes Donatello in this later time. Draperies, too, no longer the servants of decoration, become instinct with life and motion and serve the purpose of the sculptor in this field where nought else can do their work.



B 439, Singing Gallery, Cathedral Museum, Florence. Donatello, 1386–1466.

From this representation of motion in its manifold and pleasing characteristics, it was an easy step to the dramatic, that is, the study of passion. Of this we have manifold examples, like the Passion of the Saviour in the Pulpit of San Lorenzo in Florence, but none, perhaps, quite so expressive as the wonderful Feast of Herod (B 436), a little bronze panel on the Baptismal Font in Siena. This wonderful font is a symposium of the work of the best sculptors of the time, including, with lesser names, panels by Ghiberti, Donatello, and Jacopo della Quercia, the three greatest names in the art of this century. We can best appreciate the change that Donatello wrought in the portrayal of the dramatic by comparing this scene with the same theme treated by no less an artist than Giotto. Giotto is anecdotal, and in that respect infinitely clever, but the deeper passions that make the soul's tragedy were little to his liking and quite beyond his powers. They are now the great theme of Donatello. Instead of the orderly group sitting behind the table, as in the work of Giotto or Andrea Pisano, we have the sudden disarray of the demoralized banquet, as, unannounced, the soldier brings in the head of the dead prophet. The king, his nerves shattered with wine, gazes upon the face of the man he dreaded, with superstitious horror. With dishevelled hair and forgotten dignity, he shrieks out in terror like Macbeth at Banquo's ghost. Off at the right the guests, starting from the tables, rush pell mell, yet after all, not quite forgetting their character. The one in the front covers her face with her hands to shut out the horrid spectacle which she cannot bear, but the one behind frightened and recoiling, none the less gazes with a curiosity not quite repressed, at the object of her fear. Off to the left children run screaming and falling over one another in their effort to get away from the terrible sight, while, behind the board, — a masterly suggestion, — the queen, to complete the analogy with Macbeth, strives vainly to calm her frightened husband and to recall

B 436, The Feast of Herod (Panel, Font). S. Giovanni, Siena.
Donatello, 1386–1466.

his forgotten dignity. The startling suddenness with which this motive of terror is brought like a thunderbolt in among this maudlin crowd is the very ideal of the dramatic. We have had until now, and shall have hereafter, no work more dramatically perfect.

But our artist is not yet at the end of his resource. In this panel there is a touch of the art which Ghiberti had carried so far but for which Donatello elsewhere shows little sympathy, namely, perspective. In an adjacent apartment, seen through the open arcade, are a number of musicians who, with unbroken decorum (for they are not privileged to forget their discipline), continue the music which before had guided the dancer's feet. Who knows what their emotions, who knows how conscious they may be of that which disturbs the banquet? They must not show that they feel. The waltz goes on, uninterrupted. Picture it in your imagination. The dance suddenly terminated by this ghastly spectacle, and then, in startling contrast, this same rippling melody played as the accompaniment to this fearful scene. This is a fine example of the so-called dramatic foil, the heightening of effect by contrast, perfectly natural in this case, yet the whole range of imagination could not invent a motive better fitted to emphasize the startling transition. In the presence of these greater themes, how trivial seems the loss of facial beauty or draperied grace. The artist has opened wide the door of new possibilities in art, a door through which a greater than he was soon to enter.

It is difficult, as we contrast the work of Ghiberti and Donatello, to make our sympathies follow our judgment. There is an effortless pleasure in contemplating the lovely panels of Ghiberti which appeals not only to our love of beauty but to our love of indolence and ease. There is a forbidding ruggedness about the pathway over which Donatello would lead us that only the more determined will willingly traverse. Yet if we reflect for a moment on the

influence exerted by such men, the superiority of Donatello can hardly be doubted. Ghiberti's work is beautiful, lovely, charming, but woe to that art in the hands of a weak follower, and the follower is sure to be weak. Where one great man points the way, hosts of little men enter. Ghiberti's art we may accept without protest, but in the hands of his followers it was both seductive and unsafe, — seductive because the weakest things about it were attractive; unsafe because none but Ghiberti might maintain its charm. Under his lead Florentine art would have inevitably degenerated into revolting insipidity. Donatello's King David is not beautiful nor can we accept it without protest, but it stands for deep study and honest work, things needful to the artist whatever his goal. The weak things about it are not seductive and attractive. There was no danger that Donatello's followers would ever repeat the King David. His lesson, so far as they were likely to learn it, is the lesson of painstaking study and mastery of all the facts of life. That lesson was one that Florentine art, like every other, needed to be taught with all possible emphasis. But there is no danger in the long run that out of this vast repertory the artist will persist in choosing the vulgar and unbeautiful. It was the salvation of Florence that at this moment of Ghiberti enthusiasm and the diversion of sculpture from its normal channel, the powerful personality of Donatello appeared upon the scene to warn men of the dangers of superficiality and to urge upon them this deeper science as the condition of the expression of the larger beauty. It is Donatello and not Ghiberti who guides the farther development of Florentine sculpture. It is Donatello and not Ghiberti who is the spiritual ancestor of Michelangelo.

The subject of Florentine sculpture can hardly be closed without a brief allusion to another name which, but for a single work, and a single personal association, might pass unnoticed, — Andrea Verocchio. That single work is the statue

of Colleoni at Venice (B 493). That single personal association is the tutorship of Leonardo. Sculptor and painter alike, but sculptor in all his feeling, his pictures are forbidingly sculpturesque, as notably the Baptism of Christ, the one in which we first detect the hand of the more brilliant pupil. In sculpture, too, wh e we discern in his lesser works the hand of an expert technician and a dignified taste, we do not detect the imagination of a master. Of his familiar works the little fountain in the Court of the Palazzo Vecchio, the Boy with the Dolphin, is graceful and pleasing, not ill-suited to its purpose, but art in lighter vein. Or again, the David in the Bargello, this theme which was becoming the conventional test of a sculptor. Verocchio's David is an interesting study in the figure of a youth in that scrawny period of adolescence with which all are familiar but with which few are charmed. It is simply realism, legitimate but not soul-stirring. Plainly Verocchio was interested in the scientific problem involved, as was Donatello in his similar study of the Youthful St. John. He seems to have saved himself for the single great work which is now the unique glory of Venice. This work of questioned, but hardly doubtful authenticity, is easily first among the equestrian statues of all time so far as they are known to us. It had been preceded by Donatello's great statue of Gattamelata, the first great bronze of the Renaissance, which solved the difficult problems of casting on this large scale, much more than it solved the problem of interpretation. With this technical problem out of the way, Verocchio was free to give himself to the larger problems of art.

The statue is hardly to be dissociated from the familiar anecdote of Venetian craftiness to which its erection gave rise. Colleoni, a condottiere or hired commander and contractor for wars, had amassed a fortune in his profession, and dying, bequeathed this to Venice on condition that an equestrian statue of himself should be erected in St. Mark's

B 493, Monument to Bartolommeo Colleoni, Venice. Verocchio, 1435–1488.

Square. This request seemed to the Venetians a piece of effrontery. The greatest doges, even the great Dandolo himself, had not received such an honor, and to accord it to this hireling was out of the question. But, in turn, it was equally out of the question to lose this bequest, and the Venetian State, being the court of last resort, decided that the open square in front of St. Mark's Hospital, on the farther side of Venice, where no one ever goes save to see Colleoni, might be called a square of St. Mark's, and it was voted to accept the bequest and to erect the statue here. Seldom has craft been more worthily punished. The Venetians have no sculpture, and their great square lacks nothing so much as a statue like this. Nor is there in the world a statue more worthy of such a setting. Off in a distant place rises the statue of Colleoni, which even the most superficial tourist goes to see. It reminds us of the delayed justice which the French Academy paid to the eminence of Molière. When, too late, they found that they had excluded the greatest of French writers from their number, they erected a bust, and inscribed beneath it, "Nothing was lacking to his glory. He was lacking to our own." As St. Mark comes from his matchless Square and gazes upon this incomparable statue outlined against the blue sky far above the surrounding squalor, he might well add, "Our great square could add nothing to his glory; he could add the crowning glory to our square." It is inconceivable that the statue should not even now be moved to the place where both appropriateness and simple justice call for its erection.

It is impossible to analyze this unique creation. The condottiere, it must be remembered, had neither patriotism nor the love of a great people behind him. He was a hireling and his soldiers were men without a country. Only personal force and a genius for winning battles, whose booty his followers were sure to share, an unimpeachable integrity which made his word as sacred as his bond, and then, always

and above all, the power to rule by the simple force of personality a rabble that had power in their hands and knew no other law, — such were the fundamental requirements for a great condottiere. Such is the idea which Verocchio has expressed with a force and with a clearness that thrills us through and through. Too often an equestrian statue, yes, even Donatello's Gattamelata, is a weight borne by the horse as the sumpter bears his pack. Here the horse is but the plaything of the rider's will. The feet are firmly in the stirrups, which are thrown forward in powerful self-assertion. The baton of command is gripped firmly in the hand, and the strong features of the face that come out with piercing distinctness against the blue sky, betray a set purpose and an indomitable will before which the most unruly spirit must quail in instant submission. There is not in the world a more splendid adaptation of great means to great ends. An equestrian statue, large and high-perched and out beneath the open sky, cannot portray the gentle virtues, — the tenderness and sweetness of character and life. Size and character and place all call for another theme. The theme must be one of majesty and power and the treatment must be heroic. Never have these conditions been met as in the Colleoni. Verocchio is elsewhere scarce more than a mediocrity, an admirable technician, a faithful plodder in the inexhaustible science of his art. Only here, for one moment, he gathered together the resources of his craft and the imagination of a life-time into one supreme endeavor. It is worthy of the teacher of Leonardo. It is worthy of the last predecessor of Michelangelo.

CHAPTER XII

LEONARDO, THE MAGICIAN OF THE RENAISSANCE

By the superstitious in his own day, Leonardo was accounted a magician, and to a more discriminating posterity his achievements still border on the magical. Vasari speaks of him as the originator of the "fourth or modern manner." It is characteristic of Vasari, with his studio point of view, to speak of the transformation wrought by Leonardo as a change in "manner." The change was in fact far more fundamental than Vasari imagined, affecting the very substance of art and transforming its ideals.

But the term modern is more appropriate, and in spite of the lapse of the years, it still records our impression. This ability to make a continued impression of modernness is one of the best tests of greatness. Emerson is said to have loaned a copy of Plato to an old farmer and to have asked later his opinion of him. "Fine," was the reply. "He has got some of my ideas." Thus the truly great mind always seems, in a way, modern. We recognize in its outfit certain items familiar to us, and taking them to be our peculiar property, we think, "He has got some of our ideas." It does not always occur to us that our ideas, so far as they are of serious consequence, did not originate with us, but are a part of the permanent things. The ideals of every age are local versions of eternal principles. He who gives us these principles with emphasis upon the local version, is provincial; he who gives them to us with emphasis upon the principles is universal, or, as each age will say, looking at it from the standpoint of its own provincialism, he is "modern."

This is what we mean when we say that such men as Botticelli and Ghirlandajo were Florentines, while Leonardo and Michelangelo were world artists. Botticelli was a true poet, and his grasp upon the principles of art a very genuine one, but he was not able to present these principles in their universal and permanent aspect. He goes to the ends of the earth to find his theme, yet he paints the Birth of Venus in a way which none but a Florentine could understand or enjoy. Leonardo, on the contrary, knowing that the eternal things are with us always, seeks no classical theme, but takes the one nearest to hand, yet so presents it that a Greek or an Englishman would claim him for his own. This, then, is the significance of the age which we have now reached, and of the great personalities who are its representatives. It was the age in which men separated the eternal from the transitory and local, the age in which art ceased to be Florentine and became world art. Characteristically, the little minds of a later time record the event with the complacent statement that now was ushered in the "modern manner."

Leonardo, born outside of Florence and out of wedlock, none the less enjoyed the advantages of life in the favored city and of full membership in a high class Florentine family. His father, a noble by birth and a lawyer of high standing, married and removed to Florence soon after his son's birth, taking the son with him and giving him every advantage in the way of education. No moment could have been more favorable for the development of the boy's remarkable powers. Florence, long guided by the far-seeing policy of the Medici, was now approaching her zenith under the leadership of the ablest of that remarkable family. Their long continued patronage of art and letters had been as discriminating as it was munificent, and had now filled Florence with great men, not only in art, but in philosophy, in letters, in statecraft, in every department of speculative and applied science, while over them all was the incomparable Lorenzo, their master by

inherent right, astutely guiding and organizing their activities. If the age had a weakness, it lay in the very multiplicity of the opportunities thus presented, and the bewildering fascination of the inducements thus suddenly offered to the inquiring mind. The domain of knowledge had been extended with such unparalleled rapidity that there had scarcely been time to note that it now transcended the powers of a single mind. It required the sacrifice of a Leonardo to make the world realize that the era of specialization had dawned.

There was the farther limitation which is apt to characterize periods of rapid development. These magnificent conditions were local and unstable. The fullness of time had come, but it had come only in spots. Florence was not the world, and could not, in the long run, hold its own against it. It was the case of Athens over again, a phenomenal perfection within a very small area, surrounded by a comparatively brutal and unsympathetic world. Civilization had reared its structure to a dizzy height on a comparatively narrow base, and collapse was inevitable. The only civilization that can endure must be a civilization approximately as broad as the world. The vicissitudes of Leonardo's career were to prove how unstable was the social order and how untrustworthy the political organization which depended for its maintenance upon the splendid diplomacy of one mind, a mind which in the course of nature could not be sure of a successor. It was a period when no city or principality could be sure of its territory or its tribute. Wars, petty but destructive and demoralizing, interrupted industry and wasted the resources which private and princely patrons destined to "the things that are more excellent." Of the hundreds of vast projects which the genius of the time was so fertile in conceiving, only one was carried through to completion, saved from shipwreck by the lightning rapidity with which its sponsor sailed, storm driven, past the destruction

which yawned on every side. It was an age that planned everything, and that completed, — the Sistine Ceiling.

Leonardo's temperament was one which exaggerated the defects of his age. Infinitely restless and innovating, he would have planned much and finished little under the most favorable conditions. As it was, the versatility of his nature worked in evil alliance with the accidents of the time. In periods of peace and prosperity, when powerful patrons urged him to carry out his noblest projects, he was following wandering fires, pursuing inquiries of the profoundest import, but remote from the work in hand, and promising little in the way of immediate result. And when at last the much wandering mind returned to its task, and sought with all its characteristic impetuosity the opportunity so long neglected, war had come, his patron had vanished, and opportunity had gone forever.

The fact which it is important to bear in mind throughout our inquiry is that Leonardo was not primarily an artist, but a scientist. This was his own judgment, and one which inquiry confirms. Most of his life was spent in scientific investigations, the results of which in the shape of voluminous notes, are in large part still preserved to us. During his last years his concern seems to have been, not for the many art projects which he had left unfinished or unbegun, but for these notes which it was his dream to work up into a systematic treatise as his contribution to the world. In the memorandum which he addressed to Duke Sforza, his great patron, commending himself to his service, he dwells at much length on his accomplishments in the field of applied science, touching but lightly on his attainments as an artist, and even here, primarily in the field of sculpture, because of a projected monument which the Duke was known to have under consideration. That Leonardo is remembered not as a scientist but as an artist, is in accordance with a seemingly universal rule. Whenever an individual, a community, or a

people, has achieved distinction in war, in government, in science, in commerce, one or more, and at the same time in art, posterity has remembered the art and has forgotten or minimized the other achievements. Athens was the greatest commercial power of the ancient world, but we remember only Homer and Plato and Phidias. Goethe thought that he would be chiefly remembered for his contribution to the science of optics, but the world forgets that he ever concerned himself with science. The value of science to humanity is incalculable, but it is significant that in longer perspective, where values are more justly estimated, it is art that the world delights to honor. The theft of Leonardo's notebooks would scarce have won headlines in a paper, but the loss of the Mona Lisa startles and grieves the world.

Leonardo regarded himself as an engineer; and the chief activities of his life were in this field. His attention was devoted largely to hydraulics, in connection with great projects of his various patrons, for the building of canals and kindred undertakings, none of which were destined to be carried out. He was scarcely less active, however, in military engineering, though a hater of war, while he ventured even into such untried fields as electricity and aeronautics. In this great field of applied science his mind was phenomenally, but sometimes trivially active. His inventions include such familiar devices as the wheelbarrow and the camera obscura, the preliminary to modern photography, but the caprices of royal patrons diverted these great activities into trivial channels, the devising of mechanical toys of amazing cleverness for the diversion of the court and the humoring of a people not wholly supple to their ruler's will.

But it was not alone applied science which interested him. He seems to have reveled in the most abstruse studies, — in astronomy, physics, chemistry, mathematics and philosophy. To an ignorant world these mysterious pursuits brought

upon him the suspicion of magic and the practice of occult arts, a species of charlatanry for which he had the most absolute contempt. He was utterly a scientist in temper, not in the least a fakir or a dreamer about occult powers. His powers of observation seem to have been as eager and as tireless as those of Darwin, but around him, behind, before, on either side, yawned an abyss of ignorance and superstition so wide that the incomplete results of these observations could only be overwhelmed and lost. Science had yet long to wait for her convenient season.

It is as a scientist that Leonardo enters the field of art. He seems never to have executed any work of art for its own sake. Each was an experiment in some new problem of art. So far as these problems were immediately relevant to art, problems such as composition, grouping, light and shade, his contribution to art was fairly direct and worthy of his wonderful powers. But remoter problems interested him, problems of the chemistry and physics of art, and that increasingly until at last all interest in art as such seems to have been lost. This is profoundly to be regretted, for Leonardo's power of psychic analysis was the profoundest and his artistic imagination the most exquisite that the Renaissance ever knew. Only twice, however, were these extraordinary powers unreservedly devoted to the cause of art. Of the two works thus produced, one has perished utterly, and the other is but the shadow of its original self.

A still farther sacrifice art was called upon to make to the cause of science in the work of Leonardo. In his continual experiments with new mediums and processes, it happened that each one of his pictures was painted in a medium that was untried. Some of these experiments were complete failures, resulting in the entire destruction of the work. Such was the Battle of Anghiari, the colossal work intended for the Town Hall of Florence. For some unknown reason the artist was interested at the time in the phenomena

of color and heat, as illustrated in the familiar example of invisible ink which is made legible by heat. The picture was executed in the appropriate medium upon the wall of the great Council Chamber, and then heat applied to bring out the color. Unfortunately, Leonardo had not considered the difficulty of applying the heat evenly over so large a surface, and the picture was patchy and quite unpresentable as a result. If Leonardo ever contemplated repeating the work in some more suitable medium, the project was not carried out, and so one of the most remarkable of his contributions to art was lost to us, save for a copy of a copy of a small portion, by Rubens, a man too much of an artist himself to follow faithfully the work of another man.

Scarcely less disastrous was the experiment of painting the Last Supper upon plaster in tempera, a variable medium hitherto used by the Italians for painting on wood. The greater clearness of color thus secured tempted Leonardo, who was never satisfied with the dull tones of fresco, and so another supreme creation, this time his masterpiece, was nearly sacrificed to prove that tempera will not endure on plaster. Finally, all his paintings have changed color. This is due in part to chemical reactions slowly taking place in his untried mediums, and in part to the use of a dark background which has slowly worked its way through to the surface. This is a not uncommon phenomenon, more particularly in the oil painting of a later day, but nowhere so regrettable as in the work of Leonardo.

Before turning to the study of his art as such, it is well to note one personal characteristic which is ever present and complicates all his activities, namely his fondness for the weird, the enigmatical and the grotesque. This peculiarity was manifested in the most ordinary affairs of life. He was left-handed, but instead of using his left hand in the ordinary right-handed manner, he reversed the characters, writing from right to left, so that we must now use a mirror to read

his writing. In his art the same tendency is everywhere manifest. One of the keenest of observers and perfectly able to recognize the fundamental and estimate it at its true value, he is fascinated with the exceptional, the odd, the startling, the grotesque. This holds both for man and for nature. When he attempts a serious work, he is enough of an artist to know that this fondness for the grotesque and the strange must be sternly subordinated, but let him drop into art of lighter vein, let him even turn from the central theme of his picture to its accessories, and this passion for the weird immediately manifests itself. The serious works from Leonardo's hand are few, but he has left us a long series of sketches which include the most remarkable caricatures in the world. Tradition tells how as a young man he used to stand in the market place entertaining the peasants with humorous stories and antics of every description until they writhed in contortions of laughter, only that he might observe their uncouth faces in these nameless distortions. Certainly his caricatures suggest some such research. But more significant is the appearance of this tendency in the background of his serious works. Examples are the far-famed Mona Lisa (C 10), and above all, the beautiful Virgin of the Rocks (C 12), where the background is the extreme of eccentricity. We shall see later that in the analysis and representation of character itself, even of a serious type, this fondness for the unusual, the baffling, the fugitive, still manifests itself. It is impossible to characterize this personal eccentricity otherwise than as a weakness, though there is reason to believe that in one case at least it has been popularly accounted an excellence and reckoned a chief ground of his fame.

Turning now to that phase of Leonardo's manifold activity which chiefly concerns us, we have to consider in what his contribution to art consisted. He seems but to have touched art lightly in passing, yet by common consent his was a trans-

C 12, The Virgin of the Rocks. Louvre, Paris.
Leonardo da Vinci, 1452–1519.

forming touch, the most influential of any in the history of art save that of Michelangelo, and distinctly the most wholesome. Art learned from him not only to speak a new language, but to think larger thoughts, and was transformed in its innermost being.

Leonardo's teacher in art was Verocchio, a man of moderate achievements as an artist, save for his one great work in Venice which had not yet been executed. Practicing both the arts of painting and sculpture, his feeling was wholly for the latter, his conception of painting like that of the younger Michelangelo being merely pseudo sculpture, that is, studies in form rather than in color, with almost no conception that any use could be made of lights and shadows except to model figures. His painting is best known by a single inferior picture, the Baptism of Christ, whose fame rests solely on the fact that during his absence, he allowed the young Leonardo to work upon it, and observing on his return, the beautiful angel at the left from Leonardo's hand, he is said to have declared that he would never paint again. This promise, if made, was undoubtedly broken, but the story pithily records the impression produced by the work of the young artist in comparison with that of his master whose art he was so soon to make obsolete. The angel in question is undoubtedly by Leonardo. When we compare these child-like figures and their infinite naturalness and charm, with the stately functionaries which the older art had employed to perform this traditional service for the Christ, we have a hint of the revolution that is impending.

It must be remembered, however, that Verocchio's chief work was as a sculptor, and that his instruction was given in this art as well as in painting. Nor is there any reason to doubt that Leonardo's aptitude for sculpture was as great as for the sister art. It is probable that like Michelangelo he was especially endowed for this art which seems to have dominated the Florentine imagination from the first, and

which is perhaps especially suited to the interpretation of human character and feeling. It is significant that both of these supreme artists who close the history of the Italian Renaissance, were trained in both sculpture and painting, that both were privileged to carry to completion one supreme work of painting, and that both were prevented from carrying out an even greater work in sculpture on which they had set their hearts. It is possible, though we cannot prove, that Leonardo like Michelangelo, not only regarded the opportunity thus lost as his greatest, but esteemed more highly the sculptor's art. It is not probable, however, that Leonardo, whose versatility was more eager and his sympathies in art more catholic than those of Michelangelo, ever consciously disparaged painting. His devotion to this as to every art was sincere and ardent. For us, however, there is this great difference between the two men. We have Michelangelo's sculpture, fragmentary though it be, while that of Leonardo has utterly perished. Among Leonardo's sketches we cannot trace with certainty even a hint of the great monument of Sforza, the completed model of which was barbarously mutilated by the foreign conquerors of Milan and finally broken up. The art of the world has suffered few losses more serious than this.

In painting we have first to note briefly certain changes of manner, which like all formal changes are of secondary importance, but which in this case have been so far reaching in their results as to require more than the usual notice. First of all, we owe to him a new conception of the composition or arrangement of a picture. Hitherto there had been a tendency to arrange figures in line, that being obviously the best way to make each appear to advantage. As a result, the heads formed more or less of a row, running horizontally through the picture. Such pictures fit best in square or oblong frames, and Giotto and the other painters who were free to divide large walls to suit themselves, usually adopted

the horizontal rectangle as the form in which a number of persons could stand most comfortably. The reader of these pages will recall numerous examples of this kind of picture from the painting of Giotto, Masaccio, Fra Lippo, Ghirlandajo, and others. Aside from its convenience, this form of picture is especially suited to story-telling, the successive incidents being arranged in sequence. We can appreciate at once how difficult Masaccio would have found it to represent the three episodes of his story of the Tribute Money, if his space had been high and narrow, instead of broad and low, as he with the whole wall at his disposal, was free to make it.

But it is difficult to make a strong impression with such a picture. The older painters seem more or less to have realized this without quite knowing why. It seemed necessary to represent, or at least to suggest, the various episodes of their story in some such way, and the diffuseness and scattering which resulted seems to have been accepted as one of the limitations of painting. There are practically no condensed or highly unified pictures up to Leonardo's time.

Leonardo seems to have been the first to appreciate that things which are to make their impression upon the eye, must be things which can be seen all at once. They must have a center of interest which the eye can locate at once, without a particle of doubt, in the easiest and most effective spot, and all else must be subordinate to this center and must contribute to its importance. This leads to several momentous conclusions. First of all, there must be no more story-telling in painting, at least none that involves a series of episodes, for such pictures cannot be strongly unified for presentation to the eye. They must always be seen piecemeal, and so are straggling and weak. Our interest in stories is so strong that we sometimes overlook the fact that they are unsuitable for painting, but sooner or later every art must choose those subjects that it can represent best, if it is to

develop its full possibilities. Leonardo represents no subject which requires a series of episodes.

The subject thus simplified, Leonardo seeks the most condensed and unified grouping possible. Not a line of heads; that is too diffuse. The eye runs along such a line without dwelling anywhere. We must have a center of interest, and that in the best possible place. And since for some reason we always see the upper half of things better than the lower half, the center of interest must be in the upper part of the picture. To an artist who recognizes the human being as the supreme theme in art, the center of interest would naturally be a single head, placed somewhat above the rest. Such an arrangement occurs in the early picture of the Virgin of the Rocks (C 12) now in the Louvre, Paris.

But Leonardo still is not satisfied. The figures here are too widely separated, and the eye does not feel the full force of all at a glance. He desires a more compact group. Such a group we have in the famous cartoon of the Diploma Gallery (C 11),[1] London. It is difficult to refrain from commenting on the wondrous beauty of these faces, the exquisite naturalness of their posture and of the children who play about their knees, a vision of loveliness and of unfettered spirit such as Christian art up to this time had never suggested. But we are concerned for the moment with other things. The artist, experimenting here as always, is trying to work out a new kind of group. It is probably for this reason that he introduces the figures of Saint Anne to give the additional material, so to speak, which his group requires. The two women sit side by side with their heads very close together. The children, playing below, furnish the subordinate figures, and give the broader base which a group thus compactly formed, requires to give the desired impression of physical stability. A group thus formed becomes somewhat pyram-

[1] Frontispiece of this volume.

idal in form, distinctly a new plan in Italian art, but one always followed afterward. Up to Leonardo's time the horizontal line is the almost universal composition. After his time it is almost as universally the triangle, while his contemporaries, like Perugino, show a curious tendency to blend the two.

The cartoon was never executed as a painting. We do not know why, but we may surmise that he found it unsatisfactory. The two heads at the apex, however close together, divide the interest which here especially must be completely unified. The little Saint John, too, is quite to one side, and the result is that there is a deep hollow or notch on the right side of the group quite marring its symmetry. And now, looking closer, we see that Leonardo seems to have felt this defect, for we detect a large hand, with upward pointing finger, sketched in here to fill the gap. The suggestion of this hand is not at all pleasant. It can only have a symbolical meaning which jars sadly with the spirit of intimacy and quiet happiness which pervades the scene. The conclusion is quite irresistible that Leonardo formed his group at first with exquisite spontaneity, too careless, perhaps, of the resulting irregularity, and that becoming conscious of this irregularity, he sketches in the hand and observes the effect. It is far from satisfactory. It is large and obtrusive, and the suggestion is alien in spirit. What with the double apex and the unfilled notch, the piece seems hopeless. The imagination in which dwelt such figures as these without number, would hardly feel, as we do, the pity of sacrificing such a beginning. When the convenient season should come, that "ineffable left hand" had but to raise the magic wand, and these lovely forms would come forth at his bidding. Alas that he should have waited so often for the more convenient season.

One more attempt (C 16) shows the direction of his endeavor. This time the Saint Anne is again required, but to secure

C 16, Madonna, Child, and St. Anne. Louvre, Paris.
Leonardo da Vinci, 1452–1519.

the more compact group, the single apex, and the desired form, the Virgin mother sits in Saint Anne's lap and leans over to the child who plays with the lamb. The idea is a little startling and not above criticism. The group is far less spontaneous and the figures less beautiful in attitude or face than in the earlier work, but it is precisely this straining of the theme which tells us what Leonardo was striving for. Like most of his works, this picture is an experiment, valued less for itself than for the principle it illustrates.

As a final study in this scheme of composition, but in a far more complex application, let us note the Battle of Anghiari (C 21), perhaps the most terrific manifestation of energy and passion which art has thus far produced. In this writhing mass of men, horses and accoutrements, it is not difficult to trace a complex application of the same principle which we have been considering. The spontaneity is terrific, but rocks and spears and beasts and men all unconsciously unite in one of those hidden symmetries which our artist was teaching art to seek. This scene, too, helps us to understand why Leonardo sought the close and compact group instead of the open one with which he began. Imagine these horsemen separated by a little space, however savagely rushing upon one another, and we instantly feel how we have weakened the group. Compactness means intensity, a necessity of dramatic art.

It is interesting to notice how promptly Leonardo reacted upon Florentine art. It was Fra Bartolommeo, a serious but feebly artistic soul, who was privileged to formulate this principle of the new art into that lifeless rule of thumb which the craftsman in art so dearly loves. In his monumental drawing in the Uffizi in Florence, we have triangles galore. First, there is the Madonna and Child, conveniently supplemented in outline by the edge of a book. This gives our first triangle. Above the Madonna towers Saint Anne, suggestive coincidence, who in collaboration with figures around

C 21, Battle of Anghiari, Fragment (Copy by Rubens). Louvre, Paris.
Leonardo da Vinci, 1452–1519.

and beneath, forms another triangle, whose lines are echoed by the legs of the cherubs below. Starting now with the mask at the very top, and utilizing the figures of the prominent angels on either side, we descend to the heads of the powerful figures to right and left, and we have another triangle, larger and more intangible than the rest, but obviously intended. It is triangle within triangle, after the fashion that the pail makers would call a "nest." It need hardly be pointed out how little this resembles the spontaneous grouping of Leonardo of which it is none the less a conscious imitation. Andrea del Sarto, a less serious but more facile painter, again shows this influence. In his early painting, the Visit of the Magi, we have the old composition, nonchalant and happy-go-lucky, but pleasingly easy. In his Madonna of the Sack, however, we at once notice the influence of Leonardo, exerted, however, through the person of Fra Bartolommeo. The Madonna holds the Child in the identical attitude noted in the last, and even triangulates herself with the aid of Joseph's book, a repetition which, in our own age, would be accounted plagiarism. Joseph and his bag form a second triangle required by the long lunette. It is both less formal and less dignified than the work of Fra Bartolommeo, but both are echoes of Leonardo.

By far the happiest result of Leonardo's new system, however, is to be found in the work of Raphael, whose best known and finest Madonnas are ideal examples of the new principle. Such are the Sistine Madonna (C 196) in Dresden, the Madonna del Prato (C 158) in Vienna, the Cardellino (C 151) in Florence, and la Belle Jardinière (C 156) in Paris, the last three executed immediately under the influence of the great master, and the artist's most perfect creations.

Other innovations in the painter's manner are even more important, but too subtle for our profitable analysis. Such, in particular, was his new conception of light and shade. Earlier art had thought of its task as the representation of

objects, that is, a study in forms. For this purpose, forms must be indicated in outline and then "modeled" with lights and shadows, and colored for their fuller expression. Composition was merely a problem of arranging the objects, usually persons, thus represented. Line, light and shade, and color were thus merely means to the representation of forms which were the true subject of art. This is a most prosaic conception of painting, though it had to suffice for some very poetic souls, like Botticelli. It quite corresponds to the naïve conception of music which makes it merely a kind of melodious talk and lays all emphasis on hearing the words. And now, just as music, in its farther development, lays increasing stress upon the purely sensuous elements of tone, melody and harmony, subordinating words, and finally in its highest forms, dropping words altogether, so drawing and painting slowly became conscious of the fact that these purely sensuous elements of line, light and shade, and color, are themselves the substance of the art, and the representation of forms is quite a subordinate thing. The lights and shadows that fill a space are quite as important in art as those that show the shapes of persons and things, often much more so. In our own experience the lights and shadows by which we are surrounded have more influence over our spiritual moods than have the people about us. The same is true of color and line, quite independently of any shape or thing which they define. The peculiar thing about all these merely sensuous elements, both in nature and art, is that we do not think about them very much. We merely feel them. We are greatly influenced by sound, especially when rhythmical and melodious, but it is only when it takes the form of words that we speak of it as having a "meaning." We are equally susceptible to light and shade, but it is only when these lights and shadows suggest things or objects to us that we stop and think about them and attribute meaning to them.

Now things are in art what words are in music. We may treat them quite artistically if we will not be too literal, if we will throw their lights and shadows, their lines and their colors into cadence, and above all, build about them an accompaniment of these same sensuous things. But the indispensable condition of this is that we should think about the laws of musical composition and not about the mere meaning. And finally, when we have the laws of musical composition clearly in mind, it at last becomes clear to us that we can have songs without words, great painting without people or things, or with these so subordinated that the mind will take no note of them. It is into the organization of these impersonal and sensuous elements, notably light and shade, for the purposes of art, that Leonardo consciously enters as explorer. Into the mysteries of this occult science we will not attempt to penetrate beyond recognizing the existence of the problem. Suffice it to say that in Leonardo's work as in all great painting since his time, lights and shadows are considered by themselves, whether they represent objects or not, and are studied with reference to composition, much as sound, whether articulate or not, is built into music. There are few who analyze these compositions; there are still fewer who do not feel them.

But in this study of the impersonal in art, Leonardo did not disparage the old themes or the old study of personality. On the contrary, he surpassed all others, before and since, in the subtlety of his analysis of human character. It is characteristic of the universality of Leonardo's genius, that while he was lifting the impersonal and sensuous elements of painting into a cult, he was at the same moment penetrating more deeply than any had done before, into the mysteries of personality.

Leonardo revolutionized the conception of the Madonna in art. Until his day the theme is essentially ecclesiastical. The Madonna sits on a throne, and the throne is in the

church. She holds the child facing outward, as a queen regent might hold the infant king. Saints, one or more, stand guard on either side. All face outward toward the worshiping audience, whose presence is inevitably presupposed. So far as faces betray significant feeling, that feeling is serious, and tinged with the pathos of vague apprehension. In a few great examples this theme rises to a high level of spiritual suggestion, as in some of the finer works of John Bellini. For the most part it is the formalism rather than the spiritual suggestion which is impressive. Such is Raphael's Madonna Ansidei.

Leonardo changes both the essence and the manner of the theme. The Madonna comes down from her throne, the company scatters and the saints are dismissed. With only her mother or an angel for company and the two children for playmates, they leave the church and wander far from the haunts of men, among green fields and in shady nooks. They fling to the winds all formality and care. Spontaneity, liberty, and relaxation of body and mind take the place of formalism and restraint. They seem to feel the relief, for now, noteworthy change, *the Madonna smiles*. She has never smiled before. It is the most fugitive and subtle of smiles, a radiance revealing serenity and quiet joy within. Notice the Angel's face in the Virgin of the Rocks, above all, the wonderful London cartoon. How much of spiritual happiness is here told by how little! How much more than would have been told by more! To this freer and happier mood all action, especially that of the children, insensibly adjusts itself. Not less the exquisite attitudes of the figures which in the case of the cartoon are part and parcel of the all-pervading serenity. Most striking of all, perhaps, is the transformation of the child, hitherto too often a theological caricature, an unbeautiful compromise between the guileless emptiness of childhood and the infinite fullness of the divine. Note the child in the Virgin of the Rocks. Transfigured

nature, but nature in all the unspoiled beauty of dimpled babyhood.

Let us recall for a moment the significance of this change. We have smiles instead of pathos, happiness instead of foreboding, baby charm instead of symbolic mannikin, green fields instead of throne and church, nature instead of dogma. The old art had represented in the Madonna the symbol, and in rare cases, the spirit of Christianity, in the form and face of a woman. The new theme is the beauty of the eternally feminine, of mother love and childish glee. It is the consummation of the nature movement begun by Masaccio and erratically carried on by Fra Lippo, the realization of the ideal of humanism by one who cared not to call himself by that name.

But we shall misunderstand Leonardo if we picture him to our minds as in revolt against religion, however devoted to nature. We have still to consider the great masterpiece which tells us that he came not to destroy but to fulfill. It was in the year 1494, when the artist was at the height of his powers, that he began the great picture of the Last Supper (C 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8), in the refectory of the Monastery of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan. This picture of the sacred supper was the usual subject chosen to decorate the dining room of a monastery, and was executed in this case apparently under the joint auspices of the brotherhood and of the great duke, Sforza, the patron whose munificence had first tempted Leonardo from Florence, and on whose political and social necessities his talents were to be so largely squandered. Only for the brief two years spent on this work did outward circumstances and inner purpose combine to promote the highest ends of art. The unfortunate experiment of tempera has been referred to. The destruction which began so speedily to overtake the great work was little arrested by the ill-judged efforts with paint and varnish to preserve its flaking surface. Not until 1908 did the most remarkable

C 3, The Last Supper. Refectory, S. M. delle Grazie, Milan. Leonardo da Vinci, 1452–1519.

C 4, Head of Christ (Detail from Last Supper).
Refectory, S. M. delle Grazie, Milan.
Leonardo da Vinci, 1452–1519.

C 5, Group of Disciples (Detail, Last Supper : Right End). Refectory, S. M. delle Grazie, Milan. Leonardo da Vinci, 1452–1519.

C 6, Group of Disciples (Detail, Last Supper : Right Center). Refectory, S. M. delle Grazie, Milan. Leonardo da Vinci, 1452–1519.

C 7, Group of Disciples (Detail, Last Supper : Left Center). Refectory, S. M. delle Grazie, Milan. Leonardo da Vinci, 1452–1519.

C 8, Group of Disciples (Detail, Last Supper: Left End). Refectory, S. M. delle Grazie, Milan. Leonardo da Vinci, 1452–1519.

effort at restoration which history records finally stay the advancing destruction.

The student will best appreciate this remarkable work by keeping by him for occasional comparison the Last Supper by Ghirlandajo in San Marco, Florence, also that of Andrea del Sarto in San Salvi, Florence. The spiritless formalism of the one and the nonchalant unconventionality of the other are both perfectly characteristic, and absolutely in contrast with the work of Leonardo.

Christ and the twelve are ranged at the rear and the ends of a long table whose service side is toward us. Windows which frame one of the most beautiful landscapes in Italian art, open behind and furnish a luminous background for the figure of the Christ. The scene is that following immediately upon the fateful words, "Verily, verily, I say unto you that one of you shall betray me." Like a bolt from the blue these words of the sorely burdened Master have fallen upon the devoted band whose fear has been of everything save their own faithlessness. It is a supremely dramatic theme, this moment of sore trouble over the things which are of the spirit.

The theme was obviously little suited to the new scheme of picture building already considered. If the table were turned endwise, the Christ would necessarily sit at the farther end, the intimate incidents would be subordinated, and the nearer disciples must either ignore him or turn their backs on the spectator. Something like this we have in the very unsatisfactory works of Ferrari and Rubens. Or turning the table sidewise, the figures make a long row, the deadly monotony of which Ghirlandajo illustrates. It is none the less this danger which Leonardo chose to confront. It is important to note by what means he has overcome these difficulties.

To avoid the impression of monotony and the long diffuse line, he has formed of the twelve disciples four groups of

three each, and each group he has fashioned according to his new principle, into the compact pyramidal form which we have noted. Along with great variety, they all conform fairly to the favored pattern, and have also an inner unity of action and feeling which enhances their individual character. Thus, from left to right, the first group all gaze stupefied and speechless at the Master; in the second, Peter whispers to John, while Judas listens anxiously; in the third, all address Jesus with a common impulse; while the fourth group put their heads together in excited discussion. In accordance with his uniform practice he takes care that each group shall be a spiritual as well as a physical unity.

The breaking up of the monotonous line was comparatively easy, but it will occur to everyone that in building these separate groups he was sacrificing his main unity. There was the utmost danger that his picture would break to pieces, each part suggesting thoughts of its own, but giving us no supreme thought worthy of the great theme. To counteract this danger, it is necessary that each group should make it perfectly plain to us that its thought and interest, all that it stands for, spiritually, is merged in the great personality which must needs be all in all. We have already learned how this may be done. Let us note Leonardo's application of the well known means.

The group at the right end consists of three men who are excitedly discussing the announcement. The one at the end, looking at his interlocutor, shrugs his shoulders and spreads out his palms in the familiar unconscious gesture by which we protest innocence or helplessness. He is conspicuously talking to and looking at someone else than Jesus. Yet in that moment, the open hands and long fingers stretch out toward him. This trifling line of least resistance is none the less suggestive to the mind. It is a sensuous line, an eye path merely. The man opposite speaks excitedly but points behind him in the same direction. This is not merely an

eye path along which our attention moves. It is that and more, for now we feel sure that the speaker is consciously pointing at Jesus, which means that his own attention or thought is also moving that way. So, by mental suggestion, our own thought is carried along with it. This is a much more potent suggestion than the other and quite different in kind. Here, then, we have a self-centered group who make it perfectly clear that that which engages their attention and explains their action has to do with the figures in the center.

Passing now to the other end, we have three persons who are not absorbed in their own words, but gaze intently at Jesus. They do not point; they look. This is mental suggestion in its most obvious form, and when the gaze is intense, it is the form which is most potent. We have no doubt as to where this group is in spirit.

The group at the left center is, like that at the right end, self occupied, the anxious listening of Judas being as much a bond as the eager whispering of Peter. Their spiritual gravitation is again made perfectly apparent by the forward leaning and pointing of their spokesman.

But interest centers in the wonderful group of the right center who address themselves individually to Jesus with emotions so contrasted and so intense as to sunder them completely, were it not that all are but manifestations of their perfect devotion to him. To the left is Thomas whom we ungraciously remember in his doubts and forget in his devotion. It was he who, when Jesus prophesied his own death, said, "Let us also go up, that we may die with him." Loyal, yet distrustful of himself, he lifts a finger to secure attention, and asks in trembling earnestness: "Is it I, Lord?" Not so the magnificent James, that "Son of Thunder," who invoked fire from heaven to consume the unfriendly village. Recoiling with the hot indignation of outraged devotion, he seems to demand instant retraction: "Impossible! Is insult then the reward of devotion?" Beyond him, Philip

rises, his hands upon his heart, and leaning over with a look of infinite tenderness, seems to say, "Lord, thou knowest not how we love Thee." How searching is this glance of the great seer into the thoughts and intents of these hearts! Like an electric shock has come the fateful announcement, and in an instant the depressed and silent company has broken into little knots, close huddled around their several storm centers of emotion, but all drawn as by a magnet's unseen power toward that one sitting alone, whose isolation no mortal may share, but whose spell none may resist.

It is in the unfathomable suggestion of this face that we note the artist's supreme triumph. Fra Angelico gives us the seraphic ecstasy of the celestial Christ; Masaccio gives us the manliness that braved the Pharisees and drove the money changers from the Temple; each has given us one characteristic. But no other has given us a comprehension of his many-sided character. The face is indeed acquainted with grief, yet there is neither faltering nor defiance. We have but to lift ever so little the shadows of this dark hour to find the calm, gentle eyes quick with sympathy for a child, or the strong mouth shut with firm determination against hypocrisy and greed. It is easy to suggest one characteristic at a time; it is only here that we find in full expression or fugitive suggestion the varied and contrasted qualities which the great drama requires and the heart of the follower craves.

It is difficult to pass from the contemplation of this work, so easily first among the achievements of Christian art, to any other, even from the hand of Leonardo himself. Yet popular favor has divided the honors between the Last Supper and Mona Lisa (C 10), while daring robbery has, in these last days, given to the latter a factitious interest. Probably no picture in the world is so much lauded or so little understood, — lauded, perhaps, in part because not understood. The picture, painted after the Last Supper, shows

C 10, Mona Lisa. Recently lost from the Louvre, Paris.
Leonardo da Vinci, 1452–1519.

the same powers of analysis, possibly in an even higher degree. Of its marvellous color, praised by Vasari, we shall never be able to judge. The changes in color above referred to are here most indubitable. Its exquisite finish, its infinitely sensitive delineation, and its psychic subtlety few will be found to doubt. Its haunting, baffling, yet evanescent and fugitive smile is famous. The story is familiar that Leonardo kept music playing in a distant apartment in the days and months of his exacting task, that he might hold fast or call back the subtle expression which had fascinated him. He has held it fast to fascinate mankind forever. Yet the Mona Lisa, concede what we will to the artist's transcendent powers, is not to be mentioned in the same breath with the Last Supper. The powers are the same, but in the one case they are used to puzzle, and in the other to inspire. Leonardo's fondness for the weird and the enigmatical appears here in subtlest form as the master passion of this sphinx-like enchantress. She is the highest possible embodiment in art of a type not unknown in life. She is not beautiful, but she is fascinating. It is impossible to exaggerate the delicacy of her hands, the perfect poise of her figure, or the suggestiveness of her smile. There are the widest divergencies of opinion as to her meaning, but there are none who doubt her power. She is the riddle that has provoked a thousand guesses, but that none can let alone. But when we have conceded the utmost to the painter's skill and to the picture's fascination, the impression of the Mona Lisa remains a doubtful one. She is mystifying rather than satisfying. We own her power, but we do not love her. She is not the highest, even if the most marvellous of Leonardo's creations.

The art of Leonardo which in the Mona Lisa had passed into unfathomable mystery, was destined soon to pass into oblivion. A brief stay in Rome secured him another commission, again to be sacrificed to his insatiable interest in

experiment. The last years of his life were spent at the French court, where the brilliant Francis I regarded him with especial favor, prizing him, as the old man would himself have chosen, more as a scientist and sage than as an artist. In the vast range of his thought he had seemed to make no enduring conquests. Yet in art at least his influence was decisive. With all the progress that art had made up to Leonardo's time, it was still full of compromises and half measures. The artists knew that their paintings were to appeal to the eye, yet they had never learned to plan their pictures solely with reference to the laws of vision. They knew that the plain prose of life must have rhythm and accompaniment if it was to be transformed into the music of art, but they had no conception of the power of these sensuous elements, still less did they realize that art must build its whole structure with mere colors and lights and shadows as such, quite without reference to the objects which they were called upon to express. Above all, in the world of ideas, where art with all its necessities of color and shadow music must find its great opportunity, they were still dependent upon externals and symbols. The Madonna might be beautiful and spiritually suggestive, but she must still have her throne, her saints, her accustomed symbols.

Leonardo gave to Christian art its final and complete enfranchisement. In the new painting, the law of vision is substituted for the law of tradition and the church. Light and shadow still outline the objects of our thought, but they acquire a mystery and a meaning quite their own. Above all, in the interpretation of the familiar Christian themes, the last vestige of symbolism disappears to make way for a deeper meaning. We recognize the Madonna, not by the throne and the worshiping saints, but by the mother love and the quiet radiance in the face which tells of the peace in her heart. Not by an aureole of special pattern do we know the Lord, but by the great sorrow of a mighty heart. All is

Christian still, but all is more than Christian. Dogma is not rejected, but swallowed up in the larger facts of life. Not a fetich or a talisman, but the great tragedy of a world in travail until now, does Leonardo behold in the Passion of the Lord.

CHAPTER XIII

UMBRIA AND HER ARTIST

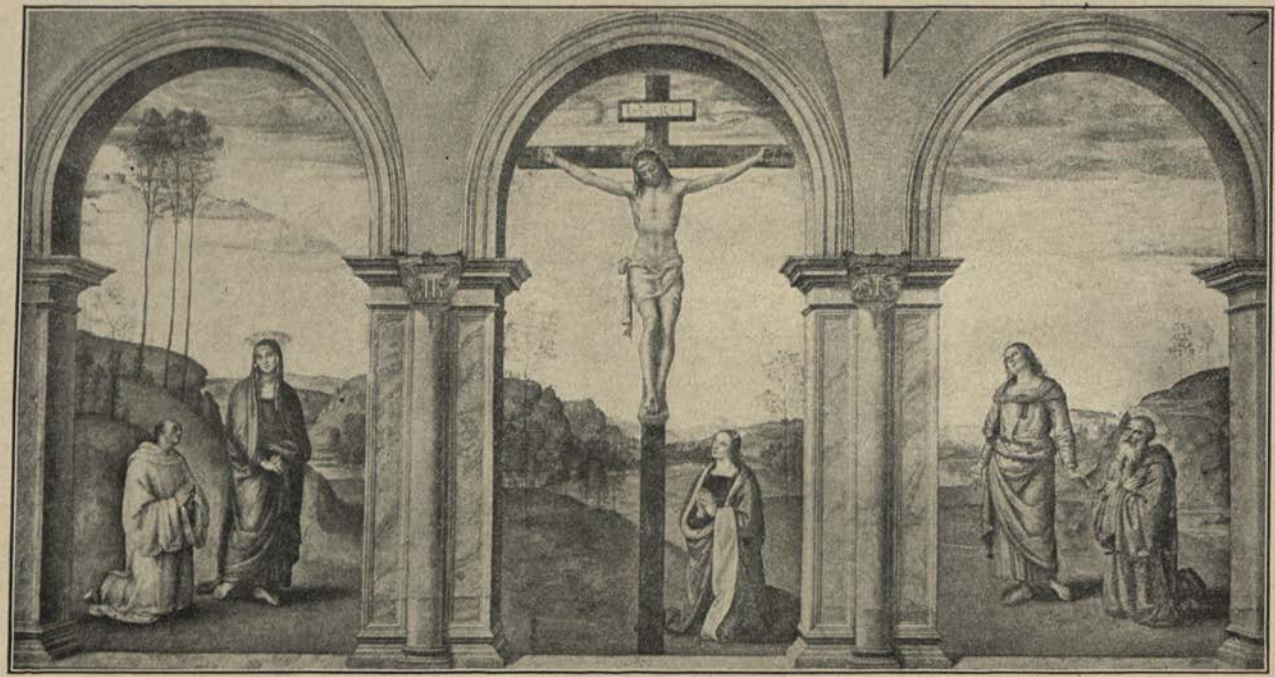
THE traveler from Rome to Florence has his choice of two routes. The one runs fairly directly through Orvieto and Chiusi, old Etruscan strongholds, passing Lake Trasimene on the right, then on into the valley of the Arno to Arezzo and Florence. It is the great route, along which has passed the heavy and the urgent traffic in all times. The other begins like the first, but soon diverges to the right, through romantic valleys and past many a city set upon a hill in the long tour through Umbria, quietest and loveliest of all Italy. We pass Terni with its hidden fall, and Narni, high perched above its broken bridge, and Spoleto, whose cathedral has the last word from Fra Lippo, and Spello, and Assisi, double shrine of Francis and of Giotto, and last of all, Perugia, before our long wandering route, threading the defile made memorable by Hannibal's victory, rejoins the direct route at the corner of Lake Trasimene.

Perugia, easily first among the cities of Umbria, was the natural headquarters for the art that should express the spirit of this smiling plain which spreads out at her feet. It is a land of peace, naturally isolated from the busier centers and more frequented routes lying to the west, like a little land-locked bay, from whose placid bosom we listen to the surf outside. Umbria was too small to dominate the thought of Italy or to produce ideals which could long survive in full competition with those of Florence, but she was large enough and sufficiently isolated to produce ideals which were singularly perfect as the expression of her own character and inner life.

It will not be worth our while to trace the development of Umbrian art from its beginnings down to the day when it was merged in the great world art. It is the same story of early darkness and slow groping toward the light that we have seen in Florence, only littler, briefer, and less eventful. Umbria never had a Giotto or a Masaccio or a Donatello. It had to suffice her, as well it might, that she produced a Perugino and a Raphael, the one representing her art in its highest local or provincial form, the other the bearer of her ideals to the great world art inaugurated by Leonardo. Perugino must therefore do duty alone as the representative of the local Umbrian art. Even so, he must be content with our very brief consideration.

In a quiet chapel of Santa Maria Maddalena in Florence, erected by the famous family of the Pazzi, who met their doom by conspiring against Lorenzo, is Perugino's Crucifixion (B 268), a large fresco which admirably represents his art. Following the suggestion of the vaulting above, he has divided the wall into three parts, framed by arches and piers. In the central division is the crucifix with the mourning Magdalen, and in the two side compartments the figures of Mary and John. Delicate Umbrian landscapes of the kind that Perugino loved, form modest but beautiful backgrounds for all.

It is apparent at a glance that the painter belongs to the old school. No Florentine artist for the last hundred and fifty years has been so formal in his symmetry as is Perugino. Formalism characterizes also the action and the expression of emotion. The intensest dramatic situations never break the calm and decorum of his characters. It is difficult, as we gaze upon this impressively formal scene, or upon the Pietà of the Pitti Gallery, with its perfect composure, to believe that Perugino was once a fellow pupil of Leonardo in the studio of Verocchio, or that he later studied under the great magician himself. He was plainly deeply stamped with the conservative Umbrian character.



B 268, The Crucifixion. S. Maria Maddalena dei Pazzi, Florence. Perugino, 1446–1524.

Passing from these general characteristics to more trifling traits, we are again impressed with the way in which local peculiarities have here resisted the corrective influence of the larger center. The hands and feet are too small, as in the St. Sebastian of the Louvre. The mouth is absurdly small, and is pursed up in silly affectation, very conspicuous in an inferior work like the Madonna and Angels of the Poldi-Pezzoli Gallery, Milan, but distinctly traceable even in so noble a work as the Certosa Altarpiece, London, unquestionably his masterpiece. These faults of proportion and expression, which are evidently not accidents, but carefully studied, are local mannerisms and affectations such as characterize the small community. They have their origin in the traditional honor paid to small feet, hands and mouth, and are an effort to express delicacy and refinement. How superficial such an effort, it is unnecessary to remark. These mannerisms are at their worst in the representation of the Christ child, who becomes the most insufferable bundle of affectations that can be imagined, with scarce a vestige of infantile character remaining.

But having noted the formalism and affectation of this Umbrian art, there remains the pleasanter task of noting Perugino's individuality and real excellence. He is like certain prim and formal people whom we have all known, who at first impressed us only by their peculiarities of manner, but who, when once known, revealed a substantial worth we were astonished that we had overlooked, and which ultimately made us half love the mannerisms with which they are associated. The virtues of Perugino are of so quiet and unobtrusive a sort that they often remain long unnoticed, but they are none the less real virtues, and entitle him to a high rank in art. Among these virtues we must notice chiefly his unfailing refinement which pervades the innermost spirit of his work, and the sincerity of his feeling. It is difficult to imagine the Crucifixion or the Mourning over

the Body of Christ (B 269) in anything like such a form as Perugino conceives them, but the longer we observe these quiet scenes, the more impossible it becomes to doubt that these mourners really feel, and that the calm that pervades the scene partakes of the composure which characterizes deep grief, as well as of the decorum of art. The refinement, too, which characterizes all Perugino's more serious work, is not a matter of surface elegance, but of inner character. There are better ways of showing this refinement than by small extremities and baby mouth, but there are few better things to show. To Perugino, too, must be credited a very beautiful, if somewhat artificial, conception of landscape, which he uses in true Italian fashion as a background or setting to his pictures. The slender trees are a little mannered, like his figures, but the amber skies and mild Umbrian beauty of hill and vale are infused with his own refined spirit.

It was to such a teacher as this, refined and sincere, infinitely painstaking and conscientious, but mannered and formal, that the young Raphael, the great exponent of Umbrian art, was to owe his earliest and most enduring lessons. Of all the artists of the Renaissance, none responded so readily as Raphael to outside influences, nor did any meet influences more varied or powerful, but it is hardly too much to say that in all his best work the influence of Perugino is traceable, and that the waning of that influence, in its deeper essence, measures Raphael's decadence.

Raphael's earliest work is undoubtedly to be found tangled up with that of Perugino, whose foible it was to make a large use of his pupils in the rather perfunctory works with which he kept the pot boiling, while he saved leisure for superior works. Independent works, however, soon appear. Such is the Vision of a Knight, a very youthful attempt to express the familiar opposition between the claims of the strenuous and the voluptuous life. The close resemblance of the maiden on the right to Perugino's figures, even such manner-

B 269, The Deposition. Pitti, Florence.
Perugino, 1446–1524.

isms as the tip of the head and the jug-handle bit of drapery behind, is noticeable, with no special message or skill to indicate that a greater than Perugino is here. The Solly Madonna (C 143) from Berlin, an early work comparable to Perugino's Madonna with Angels, is hardly more promising. The face is scarcely more beautiful, the mouth is equally petty and mannered, and the child even more impossible. Raphael is not one of the precociously great.

Having started with the Solly Madonna, let us follow the evolution of this theme a few steps farther. The Spozalizio, or Marriage of the Virgin (C 148), the great glory of the Brera Gallery in Milan, reveals Raphael as an independent artist, but still surprisingly dependent upon the work of other men. The picture is confessedly derived from another on the same subject now in Caen, a picture long attributed to Perugino, but perhaps by another and older pupil. Raphael has followed very closely, but he has improved a little at every point. He represents the dome of the temple more fully, corrects some confusing perspective in the side porches, and limbers up the stiff group in the foreground, besides other minor improvements, the whole amounting to a considerable advance, but suggesting very little creative power.

It is the figures at the left, however, which for the moment concern us. They are very much like those of Perugino. A careful observer will notice in the face of the maiden at the extreme left a slight improvement of outline and general prettiness, but she has the same mincing mouth and affected manner. The older woman standing near is even less satisfactory, being a thin disguise for the same type; but the baby mouth and affectation ill accord with age. So far Raphael is utterly conventional, a slave to the foibles of the Umbrian manner. But the maiden in front, standing in profile, with her golden hair falling over her shoulders, though plainly of the same type, shows an improvement so great as to redeem the whole. It is not too much to say that in all time she has

C 143, Solly Madonna. Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin.
Raphael, 1483–1520.

C 148, Marriage of the Virgin (Detail). Brera, Milan. Raphael, 1483–1520.

been the center of interest and that her charm has quite obscured the conventionality of the other figures. She is Raphael's first masterpiece. Yet it is difficult to define the change. It consists of little things, and nowhere involves contrast or change of ideal. The meaningless peculiarities of drapery, the affectations of manner and expression have been eliminated, and the veil of mannerism thus removed, we see essentially Perugino's lovely ideal in her real character and charm. That is all, but that is much.

(C 149) The next step in our progress is the Madonna del Granduca. Again, we cannot define the change, as compared with the preceding. It is only when we go farther back, to the Solly Madonna, that we appreciate how great is Raphael's progress. It is the same lovely type, but the beautiful face is free from all affectations now, and the mouth, though still delicate, is natural. The face is serious, and the sensitive observer will detect a fugitive expression of something which is not quite happiness, perhaps a haunting premonition, or it may be, only a touch of embarrassment. The adjustment is not quite perfect, and serenity is incomplete. We are not quite clear whether this is an accident or a studied adaptation. Raphael has shown no sign as yet of Leonardo's subtlety in dealing with these faintest shades of feeling, nor is he later disposed to represent the shadow upon the Madonna's face. None the less, the suggestion we have noticed here is not inappropriate, and the Granduca will remain to many the most beautiful of Raphael's creations.

One more step, however, brings us to the full realization of Raphael's early ideal, the complete transfiguring of the art of Perugino and of Umbria. It is significant that this next step was taken outside of Umbria and under a new influence. The place was Florence and the influence none other than that of the great Leonardo. It is significant both of the profound naturalness and universality of Leonardo's art, and of the equanimity of Raphael's temperament, that

C 149, Madonna del Granduca. Pitti, Florence.
Raphael, 1483–1520.

this all-important step seems to us a perfectly logical continuation of his Umbrian development. Of the three Madonnas painted at this time, la Belle Jardinière (C 156) of the Louvre, Paris, is best known, but not the most significant. The exquisite Madonna del Prato (C 158) of Vienna, which again many would put first in Raphael's long list, is least known. It is significant as being the only one which retains a trace of that seriousness bordering on sadness, which we notice elsewhere only in the Granduca. This has little affinity for the temperament of either Raphael or Leonardo, but is easily accounted for by the traditional theme.

(C 151) As we come now to the Madonna of the Goldfinch (del Cardellino) of the famous Tribuna in the Uffizi, Florence, we reach the fullest expression of the ideal whose development we have been tracing, an expression never surpassed by Raphael or any other. Moreover, since in all Raphael's later work, when he was striving for vaster effects and consciously pursuing different ideals, we trace as the most irrepressible element in his art, the spirit which is here consciously supreme, we are justified in seeing here the true Raphael. Other creations of Raphael have proved more popular; other Madonnas are more novel, more amazing, possibly in some sense, greater art, but none is more beautiful; above all, none is more representative of Raphael. With all his passion for assimilating the spirit and manner of other artists, Raphael had a pronounced temperament of his own, which never surrendered its sway, even in the presence of the most potent and alien influences. That temperament had found favorable environment at first in the serene provincialism of Umbrian tradition, had partially emancipated itself from the congenial thralldom of Perugino's art, and now was fully liberated rather than modified by the inspired touch of the great Florentine. This is the time to study Raphael.

Recalling now our series, the Solly Madonna, the maiden from the Spozalizio, the Granduca, let us notice this perfect

C 156, La Belle Jardinière. Louvre, Paris. Raphael, 1483–1520.

C 158, Madonna del Prato. Imperial Gallery, Vienna.
Raphael, 1483–1520.

C 151, Madonna del Cardellino (Detail). Uffizi, Florence.
Raphael, 1483–1520.

face. It is not difficult to see that the ideal has remained essentially unchanged. There is the perfect oval face toward which all have tended, the same lovely blond hair in its comely arrangement, the same guileless purity of impulse. With all his earlier limitations we feel that he meant it so from the first. But these earlier limitations have wholly disappeared. There is perfect refinement, but no mannerism or artificiality. There is the finest imaginable susceptibility, but no painful misadjustment, no discords in the perfect harmony of her being. The shadow of spiritual *malaise* which we see in the Granduca has here disappeared before the calm sunshine of perfect serenity. It is impossible to think of such a creature as having learned her accomplishments or acquired her charm. By some rare felicity of nature, we have here a glimpse of that first harmony, when life was set to the music of the spheres. It is equally inconceivable that such a creature should experience the conflict of emotions which characterize our Christian view of life. Imagine her under "conviction of sin," striving for "peace with God." Try, in her presence, to think of any of the time-honored phrases that mirror the distracted spirit of Christian consciousness, and the dissonance is instantly apparent. And it is she who triumphs in our thought. The discord dies away, ashamed, in the presence of her perfect harmony. Like a sheltered lake whose mirror surface is ruffled by no unfriendly breeze, is her perfect serenity, a serenity which recalls the art of Hellas in the golden age of Praxiteles, a serenity which Fra Angelico despaired of finding in a world distraught, and turned to Heaven to find. There are other ideals, but hardly better ideals. There is more than one way of being perfect, but this is perfection, *and this is Raphael.*

The interest of this wonderful picture centers so deeply in the face, that we have purposely isolated it, reserving our consideration of other features for other members of this

remarkable group in which they are even better studied. Turning to these more general features, the influence of Leonardo is at once apparent. There is the nature setting, the relaxation of body and mind, the quiet intimacy and unconsciousness of formal occasion and its restraints, which we have already noted as the innovation of the great master. Raphael's early Madonnas, despite their simplicity, have clearly been of the older type. They stand before a worshiping world, conscious of their special character, and with action and feeling adjusted to it. Nor does Raphael wholly break with the old tradition. His Madonna Ansidei of London, painted later than this for chapel purposes, is extreme in its conformity to tradition. It is significant of the changed allegiance of art, that the Madonna just considered was painted as a wedding present, and its companions for similar secular occasions. The wider horizon of Leonardo inevitably stretched beyond the confines of the church.

But in this following of Leonardo, it is interesting to note the persistence of Raphael's Umbrian heritage, and his unique ability to improve what he borrowed. Thus the landscape setting, though suggested by Leonardo, is not in the least like that of the Mona Lisa or the Virgin of the Rocks (C 10, 12). It is of the quiet and lovely Umbrian type, with skies and trees of Perugino's kind. The pyramidal group, too, so carefully sought by Leonardo, is more perfect than that of the London cartoon, and more plausible and pleasing than that of the Madonna with Saint Anne. That which Leonardo had invented and Fra Bartolommeo had mechanized, Raphael has perfected. This admirably illustrates the relative abilities and achievements of the three men. Leonardo invents but never perfects; Fra Bartolommeo never invents, but formulates and reduces to rule; Raphael neither invents nor formulates, but assimilates and perfects with his exquisite taste. The borrower usually degrades and misunderstands; Raphael always improves what he borrows. Such borrowing,

however direct, is hardly plagiarism, or, if plagiarism, it is a plagiarism that is entitled to honor.

The list of Raphael's later Madonnas is a long one, and marked with brilliant achievement, but it is difficult to trace farther the consistent development of an ideal. This is partly due to the exhaustion of the primary theme, — for it was as futile to try to surpass, as it was unsatisfactory to repeat the Leonardo-Umbrian type, — and partly to his permanent removal to Rome where, in this meeting place of the nations, his susceptible nature was exposed to a multitude of influences which even his genius for assimilation could not fuse into a harmonious ideal. Mention has been made of the Madonna Ansidei and its return to the formal religious type, a type for the deeper meaning of which Raphael shows little aptitude. Its amazing delicacy and refinement scarcely lift it from the domain of symbolism, into the higher realm of inspired art. The Madonna Garvagh, which hangs close beside it in the London Gallery, a work of doubtful authenticity, is uniquely rather than significantly beautiful. The Madonna di Casa Tempi in Munich carries to rather extravagant lengths the new nature motive of Leonardo. In all these as in most of his later works, we note sporadic experiments, often unsuccessful, sometimes unworthy. Only in rare instances does one of these isolated efforts result in a masterpiece. Two such call for special notice.

The Madonna of the Chair (C 188) rivals the Sistine in popular favor. It is absolutely of the nature type, religious suggestion being wholly lacking, but the artist is no longer dependent upon the green fields which were Leonardo's suggested setting. The setting is an interior with the simplest of detail. The picture derives its significance and even its popularity with the untechnical, primarily from its superb composition and the means by which that has been secured. It is the culmination of a series of experiments in composition for the round frame. These experiments are most familiar to

C 188, Madonna della Sedia. Pitti, Florence.
Raphael, 1483–1520.

us in the work of Botticelli. Beginning with the almost planless Madonna of the Borghese Gallery, Rome, we pass to the Madonna of the Lilies in Berlin, and to the charming tondo of the London Gallery, in both of which the lines seem to radiate from the top of the picture downward. It reminds us somewhat of Leonardo's plan, which was obviously not designed for circular pictures. But when we come to the famed Madonna of the Magnificat (B 177), the plan completely changes. The figures are turned sidewise and so arranged that their outline suggests the curve of the frame itself, touching the frame at a single point and curving away from it on a shortening radius. Note the angel on the left, the Madonna on the right, even the child, while the border of the Madonna's robe and other details are sensitive to the same curve suggestion. The space unaccounted for is left in the center of the picture where it is farthest from the frame and requires least adjustment to it. It is an admirable study. Raphael's picture is similar but simpler and better. A single spiral dominates the whole, guiding the eye to the center of interest as surely as it does unconsciously. This is the perfection of a composition which Botticelli had already made excellent.

But we have had occasion to note at the very beginning of our studies, in connection with the profound insight of the Greek artists, how important it is that composition should have its inner motive, its obvious and sufficient justification. It will not do to put figures arbitrarily into the desired place or pose; they must put themselves there, quite spontaneously and willingly, and for a reason which we can understand and with which we can sympathize. The noblest example we have yet found of a composition at once satisfactory in itself, and worthily motived, is the Battle of Issus, that much dimmed reflection of a Greek masterpiece.

Comparing, in this connection, the work of Botticelli with that of Raphael, we see how far superior is the latter.

B 177, Madonna of the Magnificat. Uffizi, Florence.
Botticelli, 1447–1510.

Botticelli wants his Madonna to lean over, and so he makes her reach across the beautiful illuminated manuscript to dip her pen in the inkstand which the little angel rather unaccommodatingly holds back. The motive by which Botticelli thus secures the desired pose is wholly uninspiring, not to mention the suggestion of a negligent angel and a possible ink-blot. The composition is excellent, but the motive is trivial, arbitrary and inartistic.

Raphael secures the desired composition by a motive perfectly simple, natural, and unforced, and what is far more important, a motive which commands instant and universal sympathy. The mother bows her head against the face of her babe whom she holds in a close embrace, with a spontaneous outburst of maternal tenderness which would find recognition and sympathy in any age and among any people. As the agonized affection of Darius speaks to us across the ages, so this manifestation of maternal tenderness, decorous but sincere, carries to remotest ages a message which no change of life or thought can ever make unwelcome or obscure. The old religious significance of the Madonna has totally disappeared, but we seem to stand in an even holier presence. All honor to the art which thus finds its theme in the holy and eternal things.

(C 196) The Sistine Madonna, most famous of Raphael's work, belongs to a late period of his art, though it is not, as tradition long asserted, his last Madonna. Later works, however, bear no comparison with this masterpiece, and it may appropriately close our study of this important phase of Raphael's work. In this work more than in any other, Raphael shows originality of a high order and a perception of some of the profoundest principles of art. It is less characteristic of Raphael's temperament than the exquisite productions of an earlier day, nor have the many influences to which Raphael in this later day was so willingly subject, brought anything to compensate for the loss of the Perugino

C 196, Madonna di San Sisto. Gallery, Dresden.
Raphael, 1483–1520.

influence which seems to have quite disappeared. In coloring, and in the infinite perfectness of his workmanship, the work compares unfavorably with the lovely Madonnas of the Leonardo period. But these things are forgotten and should be forgotten in the presence of a conception so noble, so original as this.

We have seen that the ecclesiastical and formal conception of the Madonna, in vogue during the first two centuries of the Renaissance, yielded, under the influence of Leonardo, to the informal and natural conception, with emphasis upon feminine rather than upon religious ideals, and upon natural rather than symbolical motives. It is convenient, if not altogether adequate, to speak of the one as the ecclesiastical and the other as the nature Madonna. Both are, or may be, in a high sense, religious. We have seen that Raphael, while occasionally painting for religious purposes an ecclesiastical Madonna of the most traditional type (the Madonna Ansidei), is immediately attracted by Leonardo's new nature type, and paints the Madonnas designed for gifts, and therefore freely expressing his personal taste, in this new character. This new motive he elaborates with many, though not deeply significant, variations. The Madonna caresses the child instead of watching him at play; the interior setting is substituted for the exterior, and so forth. But these are only natural developments of a theme which, in essence, we owe to Leonardo.

As we attempt to assign the Sistine Madonna to its place, we are immediately conscious that we have a new type, neither the ecclesiastical nor the nature Madonna, but one requiring a third category, in which, however, it stands alone. The Madonna is not seated upon the throne or composed for a formal occasion, and in spite of the presence of attendant saints, the suggestion is not that of homage or worship. Still less is this the nature Madonna, care free and filled with thoughts of children's play or maternal tenderness. We

have no question as to her love for the child, — such a child, — but for her to turn her attention toward it to embrace or caress it, is unthinkable. There is something else which fills all minds and hearts at this moment with palpitating emotion. The Madonna is here conceived as a celestial being, who appears upon the clouds of heaven and gazes with eyes big with wonder that just hints of anxiety and fear, at the great world which, unconscious, suffering, sordid and inscrutable, reveals itself to her gaze. Nothing can surpass the suggestiveness of this gaze, in which the unconfused simplicity of childhood is tinged with the consciousness of the world's sorrow and the faint foreboding of a Saviour's pain. And in admirable contrast is the face of the child, the artist's supreme triumph, whose wondrous eyes reveal a calm which partakes less of the unconsciousness of childhood than of the infinite repose of the divine. The picture is as unique in the whole range of Christian art as in the art of Raphael himself. To be sure, there are plenty of pictures which represent the Madonna among the clouds, usually ascending and contemplating heaven rather than earth. There are numerous Coronations of the Virgin, which give us ostensibly the celestial rather than the earthly Madonna. But these differences are ordinarily purely nominal. The Madonna gazes, for the most part, from her cloudy cushions, with the same unemotional complacency as from a cushioned divan, and she receives the crown with no hint in face or posture that she has grown to the part. Everywhere it is objective, materialistic, symbolistic. You know she is going to Heaven because she is standing on clouds instead of earth. You know she is Queen of Heaven because the crown is being placed upon her head. How tired we get of all this sanctity which is a thing of outward signs! The few great pictures of the world are those in which the meaning is inherent, not attached. She is Queen of Heaven even without her crown, and Queen of Heaven still on earth, for Heaven

follows where she goes. Among such pictures the Sistine Madonna must always be accorded a foremost place.

As we revert in thought to the rarity of this creative imagination in Raphael's work, his constant inclination to borrow from other painters motives which they have but imperfectly expressed and to find his opportunity in completing their task, we are constrained to seek an explanation of this extraordinary production. We find no prototype for the Sistine in any other known work. We must rather seek it in Raphael's own. The so-called Donna Velata (C 194) is an admirable portrait of not far from the same period. There is some reason to believe that it is the portrait of a woman to whom Raphael was devotedly attached and to whom he long maintained a relation of affectionate intimacy. Her striking personal characteristic seems to have been the large, lustrous brown eyes which gaze so impressively from the portrait. Eyes so large, so wide open, so lustrous and appealing, easily impress us with the suggestion of unusual sentiments. If serious, they are suggestive of wonder; if the mood be a trifle somber, they deepen the suggestion of pathos. Daily life furnishes abundant examples.

Imagine the impression which these deep and haunting eyes must make, in long association, upon a spirit whose natural extreme susceptibility was quickened by ardent affection. Those wondering eyes, so often seen in unconscious musing by the fireside, had a suggestiveness too beautiful to be lost. But where would it find its place in art? Not in the Madonna of the throne. She must not wonder or haunt you with her gaze. She must receive your homage with formal composure. Not in the Madonna of the fields and of the quiet nature setting. Naturalness is not an occasion for wonder, and this deep seriousness tinged with pathos has no place in the beautiful serenity of mother love. The traditional art offered no place where these eyes could find a justification for their deeper suggestion. Spurred on by

C 194, Donna Velata. Pitti, Florence. Raphael, 1483–1520.

affection, Raphael finds the place in a new creation, unique in all Christian art, and noble as it is unique.

The Sistine Madonna is undoubtedly an idealized portrait of this object of Raphael's affection. The resemblance to the Donna Velata is unmistakable. Yet the sympathetic observer will be quick to recognize that with all this resemblance, the gulf between the two is profound. Raphael has not repeated the impertinence of Fra Lippo. The Madonna has not been degraded to the level of a woman; the woman has been exalted to the level of the Madonna. Nothing could better illustrate the true character of art, its essentially creative rather than imitative rôle, than a comparison of these two pictures which owe their origin to a single woman. In the one the woman appears, at her best, but still the woman. In the other she is transfigured. She has but furnished the suggestion for an inspired imagination. So much, and only so much, she may legitimately do.

It seems ungracious, in the presence of such a work, to note the artist's limitations. Were it not that they are significantly present, we might well forego the unwelcome task. Of the mother and child enough has been said, and nothing can be said save in praise. The cherubs below are again in loveliest harmony with the Christ Child whose beauty and heavenly repose they plainly reflect. No whit inferior, too, is the noble Saint Sixtus, whose intense absorption, not merely in the apparition of the Madonna, but in the deep emotion which fills her bosom as she gazes upon the world which he points out below, contributes magnificently to the impressiveness of the whole. But the Santa Barbara to the right does not thus add herself to the larger whole. Kneeling in seeming devotion, she turns the perfect oval of her face toward the spectator for reasons which, however innocent under other conditions, are here disturbing. Ingenuity is taxed to explain satisfactorily this discordant note. She is looking toward the outspread world; she is turning

away from the dazzling brightness of the Madonna, and so forth. But she obviously is doing neither. She is not looking at anything or looking away from anything. The suggestion is one of modest complacency, of delicate consciousness that she is being looked at. In the pictures of this later period which are more complex and ambitious than those of an earlier day, this feature of irrelevant prettiness is seldom absent. Santa Barbara turns her face because it is a pretty face, and Raphael never enters so deeply into the spirit of a great theme that he can resist the appeal of a pretty face. In pictures where quiet, reposeful charm is the pervasive characteristic, this mildly obtrusive beauty love is little noticed, but in a picture deeply imbued with some great passion, or representing some significant incident, the conscious appeal of a pretty face is disturbing. Such themes as these, themes essentially dramatic in character, Raphael was ill fitted by nature to treat. The age in which he lived had learned to care for them above all else. The example of Leonardo's Battle of Anghiari and the Last Supper, and even more, of Michelangelo's great works with their all-dominating emotion, gave countenance to the tendency of the age. The Sistine Madonna, so deeply imbued with sublime feeling, is Raphael's one successful attempt at a spiritually dramatic theme. It is a matter neither for surprise nor for serious criticism that it shows traces of a temperament more at home in other themes.

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CHAPTER XIV

RAPHAEL IN ROME

We have thus far known Raphael only in Umbria and in Florence. Born and bred in Umbria and deeply imbued with Umbrian tradition to which his nature was most congenial, his sojourn in Florence did not seriously modify his Umbrian character. This was the more true because he seems to have been little known in Florence and to have had no standing alongside Leonardo and Michelangelo. Even Perugino appears to have been more esteemed than Raphael, if we may judge by the large commissions given him, not only in remoter parts of Italy but in Florence itself, while Raphael found employment only in Umbria or by Umbrian patrons. This tended to perpetuate his Umbrian manner. The beautiful works which reflect Leonardo's influence found no purchasers. Perhaps a lively popularity and a number of Florentine commissions during this period would have transformed the susceptible young artist into the Florentine type, but as it was, he left Florence, not without deep indebtedness to Leonardo and others, but almost as Umbrian as he came. Florence had merely stimulated him to the fuller realization of his Umbrian ideals, serenity, refinement and reposeful harmony. He seems to have caught nothing of the vivacity of Giotto's narratives, or the instinctive realism of Masaccio's shivering youth, or the dramatic intensity of the Battle of Anghiari, or the pathos of even the earlier Michelangelo works. That he escaped at this time influences so far from his nature, was probably due to his immaturity and to his absorption in problems nearer at hand.

Raphael is best known to us, however, as a citizen of Rome, where he passed the last twelve years of his brief life. It was the most splendid period in the history of papal Rome, and the great metropolis, still central in men's thoughts, was drawing to herself both the tribute and the talent of the Christian world. The contrast with Umbria was the greatest possible. Life in the one was tranquil and centered about simple and harmonious ideals. In the other it was turbulent, and subject to powerful and varied influences. As the young Raphael was called to Rome by no less a patron than the pope, and thus put at once and forever beyond the reach of Umbrian patrons, the conservative Umbrian influence was wholly removed. With powers fully matured, early ideals somewhat outgrown, the stimulus of great commissions and large rewards, and the example of other artists whom it was his passion to emulate, Raphael underwent a transformation so rapid and complete that we hardly recognize him under these changed conditions. Yet in the variable alloy of this much influenced later work, we can still easily discern Raphael's self as the main ingredient. Personality may be disguised, but never permanently suppressed.

The sudden change which accompanied Raphael's transfer to Rome was accentuated by special conditions. As we shall have occasion to note in connection with Michelangelo, it was the good pleasure of the enemies of the great Florentine to unite in an effort to push Raphael to the fore. This espousal of his cause had its ulterior motives, but it was none the less genuine and sincere. Raphael had the invaluable gift of everywhere evoking affection. His infinite serenity, apparently untroubled by any echoes of sadness, was a thing so lovable that even with less of genius he would have been one of the most beloved of men. Add to this his rare taste, his absolute facility and adaptability, and his passion for assimilating the ideas and spirit of all with whom he came in contact, and his claim upon the affection of men was com-

plete. It mattered not that men like Bramante found Raphael a convenient pretext for their opposition to Michelangelo. Even without this reason he could hardly have lacked their enthusiastic support. His pathway, therefore, was made smooth, too smooth, in fact, for it was Raphael's misfortune to find tempting opportunity open in every direction, and with his facile and adaptable nature, he did not always know where to draw the line. Coming upon the scene at the moment when Michelangelo held all attention, his greatest opportunity came almost at the outset. The pope, to be sure, refused absolutely the request of his friends that he should be given a part in the Sistine Ceiling. Doubtless he desired that opportunity. Beyond question he would have given us works of high merit, however incongruous with the work of the greater master. But if the refusal brought disappointment there was no trace of it in Raphael's demeanor. The refusal was accompanied, by way of compensation, by a commission to paint the so-called Stanze, or Apartments of the Vatican, a series of rooms whose original function was varied, and whose subsequent use has been merely to house the most famous of Raphael's creations. Like the Sistine Ceiling, these Stanze had already been decorated, and in part at least, by artists of high merit, some of the decorations having been barely completed. The ruthlessness of this time is more or less characteristic of every creative age. Inferior work should not stand in the way of the more perfect possibilities of the time. And so as the earlier ceiling was destroyed to make way for Michelangelo's creations, the decorations upon the walls of these apartments were destroyed to make way for those of Raphael. They were doubtless of unequal merit, but some of them certainly we lose with regret. In one case Raphael deliberately refused to destroy the work of a predecessor, the splendid ceiling by his own master, Perugino. Posterity has certainly honored him for the refusal. The ceiling is one of the finest of

Perugino's works, and so far superior to any that Raphael or his helpers executed in the adjoining rooms that it raises the query whether in other connections the loss has been compensated by the gain. It is certainly a matter for regret that Pope Julius could not have found vacant walls for Raphael's use.

In the prosecution of this work Raphael stands in marked contrast with Michelangelo. His lease of life was short, but this at the outset he could not know. The work dragged on slowly, interrupted at frequent intervals, and, worst of all, broken by continuous and repeated changes in the artist's ideals and methods. The marvel of the Sistine Ceiling is that in all its vastness there is such a unity of spirit. The opposite is true of Raphael's work. The greatest diversities of manner and inequality of thought and spirit characterize these works that come most unequally from his hand. In our tour of the Stanze we first enter the so-called Room of the Conflagration (Sala del Incendio), which takes its name from Raphael's picture upon the main wall. It is here that Raphael has preserved the ceiling executed by his master. It is a beautiful design in blue and gold, a splendid decorative scheme in color, with little of the pictorial even in the great medallions that fill the triangular spaces of the intersecting vaults. For the most part only flat design covers the ceiling, leaving the shape of the vaults undimmed, the medallion pictures themselves being greatly subdued as regards their pictorial character. The gentle refinement of Perugino's manner is manifest in the whole. Only perhaps in the massive decorative lines that map out the seams of the vaulting and so the structure of the building, is there a bit of surfeit in the wealth of detail that the artist has lavished upon his work. All in all, however, considering the fidelity with which the artist has stuck to his architecture and made that determine his design, the brilliancy and refinement of his color and the subordination of his pictorial effect, we must call this one

of the finest wall decorations in Rome. Merely as a decoration, that is, the beautifying of a thing whose own character is recognized and respected, it is far superior to Michelangelo's immortal ceiling. The decorative quality of the Sistine Ceiling is admittedly subordinated to its vaster spiritual suggestion. Not so with Perugino; there is not too much to think about in his decoration as such. There should not be. The mind is left relatively free to deal with the larger concept of the building itself. When we pass to the next room, most famous in Raphael's work, we shall at once see the superiority of Perugino's design. There is a certain similarity between the two. Here again there is beautiful coloring, wealth of detail, even charming faces and pictorial effect, but the artist of feebler decorative sense has moved his medallions round, right across the ribs or seams in which the vaultings join, these junctures being pared down or obscured in order that his medallions may find a place upon the curved surface. Everywhere he has broken the architectural line, flouted, ignored it. With all its elegant detail, it is deliberately and egregiously bad as a decoration.

But, passing from the ceiling, it will suffice to notice briefly Raphael's work upon the walls of this first apartment. It is not his earliest work nor in any sense his best. If there is one thing clearer than another it is that Raphael was not primarily dramatic. The essence of the dramatic is to seize upon momentary situations and interpret them primarily in terms of passion. Not a character with its permanent potentiality, but a moment with its unexpected conjunction of passion; character torn by contrasted impulses and revealing itself by its choice under these strange circumstances; that is the essence of the dramatic.

Now this is very far from being the natural theme in painting. In pictures we may represent the relations of people in space but we can only give a single moment of time. We cannot represent what happened before or happened after.

Moreover, the moment which we do give, we cannot give as a moment; it becomes fixed and permanent. It is obvious that the things of the moment do not fit in a thing so permanent, so static; still less things that involve successive moments, different one from another. All that is a truism of art criticism, though the artist will never get over the desire to somehow triumph over these limitations of his art, and if highly gifted with the power of psychic suggestion, as was Giotto, Michelangelo, or Titian, he can accomplish wonders in making his art do the impossible. But if his sympathies are rather with the reposeful, the placid and the calm, he will feel most keenly these limitations inherent in his art and will find the line of least resistance, — that is the line of greatest achievement, — in quite a different direction. Such was Raphael. He had nothing of the tremendous passion of Michelangelo; his very power and beauty lay in his freedom from it. Yet the age, led irresistibly by the genius of Michelangelo, craved this new and difficult theme in art. To be dramatic, to give us not the serenely beautiful but the soul-stirring — that was the desire of the age, and particularly of Rome, where men had been most aroused to this new possibility.

The fresco in this first room is an attempt on Raphael's part to meet this new demand for dramatic compositions. It tells us an old story of a conflagration that broke out in the Borgo, or suburb of Rome in which St. Peter's is situated, and of the miraculous extinguishing of the fire by the pope who appeared in a balcony holding the sacred Host. Raphael has placed both pope and miracle quite in the background, but with little profit, for the foreground is occupied by figures unplausibly chosen and disposed, who are supposed to represent the confusion and disarray caused by the fire but who, if the truth must be told, represent primarily Raphael's emulation of Michelangelo's powerful nudes. The youth escaping over the wall and hanging by his fingers is the one

thing that remains in memory as we leave this extraordinary work. He is a conspicuous, not to say an impertinent display of anatomical knowledge. Hardly more satisfactory are the group of women who, with charming contour and inane gestures, fill the middle foreground of the picture. It may be that our knowledge of feminine character furnishes justification for the silly and helpless posing that this group displays, but at least it is not the feminine at its best. No, this is cheap theater, not life, and the painter of the ineffable Madonna is here wasting his time. It must only be remembered in extenuation that he was but partially responsible for the choice.

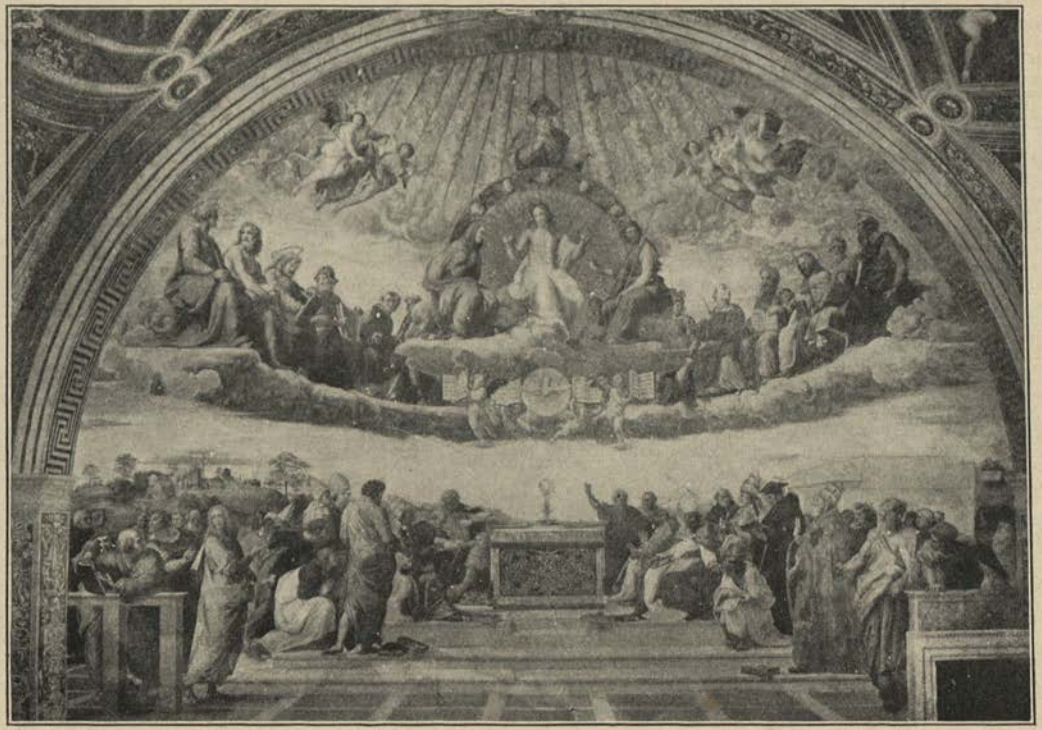
We will hasten to the next room which is the crowning glory of Raphael's later work. Here, upon these four walls, we find, not indeed the thing that charmed us most in the youthful days of Perugia and Florence, but the thing that charmed, and justly charmed his contemporaries. Here is seen at its best that beautiful symmetry and unconstrained grace of grouping which characterizes his work here above all others. We will begin with the scarce noticed wall on the farther side. It is the smallest of the four and offers but a long and slender sector of a circle in which to dispose his figures. Prudence, Force, and Moderation (C 169) are the names they bear, but any others will do as well. It would certainly baffle the most acute analysis to know why these names are applied, or which of the figures should lay claim to each. But that need not greatly concern us. Such names suggest the most arid themes in art, themes that, unless embodied in some concrete situation or circumstance, are little more than intellectual concepts, themes for philosophy rather than for art. Raphael is the last man to take such themes seriously. But if their interpretive value is slight, their decorative charm is superlative. Of all painters that the Renaissance knew, none succeeded so well as Raphael in adjusting a group of figures in a space, more particularly,

C 169, Prudence, Force, and Moderation. Camera della Segnatura, Vatican, Rome.
Raphael, 1483–1520.

an unusual space, in such a way that the space seemed made to order, the only possible space that could accommodate lines and groupings whose beauty sufficiently explained their existence. The way in which the curves, longer and shorter, echo the confining curve and thus make hidden music within its space, is simply above all praise. It is the perfection of a single plane decorative composition, for decorative, rather than pictorial, it obviously is. There is no far-reaching vista or spacious background, there is no enveloping light and shadow or subsidiary detail, just a beautiful group of figures, arranged in a single plane and for reasons of their own, not too serious but quite sufficient, weaving themselves into a pattern so exquisite that it commands our unqualified admiration. This we may take as a model, perhaps, of the higher decorative feeling of the Renaissance in its simpler form. Beyond this there is nothing of moment in the picture, and the observer who appreciates this, will crave nothing more.

The wall on the right is better known and, with the possible exception of its rival opposite, is the most famous creation of the master. It is interesting to note, by the way, that all of these pictures which the public has deemed worthy of fame have been renamed. The subjects of the frescoes upon these three walls, as Raphael would have given them, seem to have been, Divine Philosophy, Secular Philosophy, and Poetry. It is not without significance that they are popularly known as the Discussion (Disputà) Concerning the Trinity, the School of Athens, and Parnassus. Something concrete the popular mind demands, and if official titles do not give it, so much the worse for official titles.

(C 160) The Disputà is an astonishing work. We no longer have a group of figures arranged in a single perpendicular plane, outlining themselves in a charming pattern as in the fresco already considered. The space was much too large for that, and Raphael's purpose much too ambitious. First and low-



C 160, The Dispute of the Sacrament. Camera della Segnatura, Vatican, Rome. Raphael, 1483–1520.

est of all, there is a pavement which looks much as though it were going to be the pavement of a church. In the rear is a raised platform where we find, as we expect, the altar and upon the altar the Host, the most significant symbol of the church. But, amazing to relate, we find no church about it. We look over the heads of the spectators, grouped on either side, into a landscape, all delicate, Umbrian, charming, such as Raphael had learned from Perugino. Nothing could well be more unplausible than this, but we readily forgive its unplausibility. Above this landscape vista we come next to a mass of clouds, but curious to relate, these clouds, instead of being formless and irregular, as clouds are wont to be, now range themselves with architectural regularity into a curving platform, and on this platform sit in most beautiful symmetry the worthies of the church, the Christ himself in the center, above his head the Dove, and higher still, the figure of God the Father, thus representing in conventional form the Trinity. This, aided by the lively conversation going on below, has given the picture its popular name. And now above these worthies and these sacred symbols we find angels, grouped again in beautiful regularity, and other angels still, the very substance of clouds, that in infinite profusion fill the cloudy vault, again with dome-like regularity. And this time their character is farther enhanced by long streaming rays of light that descend from the central point above. In a word, we start with architecture, and suddenly change our minds and take in the charm of out of doors, and then when we are accustomed to that, we rise to the clouds and as suddenly the clouds become architectural and build the comeliest of domed backgrounds in the upper part of the scene. The conception is as surprising as it is pleasing. It is no small tribute to our artist that the work pleases despite our surprise.

But if we ask what it is that has made this picture so famous, what new principle it illustrates, what signal triumph

it embodies, we must venture somewhat farther into an inquiry which has already engaged our attention. This is perhaps the time to note more exactly the few facts with which even the popular student of art must be equipped regarding the great subject of composition. Of its subtleties and intricacies we will take no account. Of its fundamental character and needs it is impossible that we should remain unconscious.

We walk out of a summer afternoon to some beautiful spot where a garden party is being held. Ladies in charming dresses are wandering about, it may be a class of "sweet girl graduates," or other. As we gaze upon them, with the setting of shrubbery and natural beauty, nothing seems wanting to the perfection of the scene. But let the photographer appear and prepare to take a picture of the scene, and instantly all is changed. These people know by instinct that the photograph must be differently planned. They gather into formal groups, arranged with reference to height, some standing, some sitting, with affectation of carelessness here and there, but with regularity and order dominating the whole. They feel at once that without this the photograph would be a failure. Yet at first thought the photograph would seem to be only a transcript of life, and the charm that was in the scene before ought in some way to be transferable to the reproduction. Not so. All human experience justifies this judgment which is little less than an instinct in the promptness and universality of its adoption. Why this need of regularity where the irregular was more beautiful before? The answer is simple. The photograph will be mounted upon a *symmetrical* card. It will have outline, and we cannot look upon it and ignore that outline. A photograph, as we say, must be composed, but the composition must not be noticed or thought of. The one who admires the figures may have no knowledge of this art. The photographer himself may have no theories about it, may not even know the word,

but if he takes acceptable photographs, he is guided constantly by the instinct in question.

With the painter, this demand is even more pronounced. All good paintings are most carefully composed. The earlier paintings are very simply and overtly arranged; the later ones are arranged with even greater care, but with a distinct effort to make the arrangement unobtrusive, to make it felt rather than thought about. The reason is fundamentally the same. The painting, no matter what it be, will ultimately occupy a symmetrical space, — it may be square or oblong or any other possible shape, but whatever it be, it is almost certain to be symmetrical. If it be square or oblong, the exaction of symmetry is but a moderate one. If, on the other hand, its outline be something more studied and presumably more æsthetic in itself, then the necessity of respecting that outline is increased. A round picture must be much more emphatically composed than a square one; a picture in a Gothic arch most exactingly so. Now the mediæval artists met this need of composition in a very naïve and childlike fashion. Having no perspective in their pictures, the figures are all arranged in a single row and there was little hesitation on the part of these men to whom the idea of naturalness was of such minor concern, in arranging them in quite unplausible symmetry. The Madonna was in the center and held the child before her, sometimes facing exactly outward, and with perfect balance of right and left. And if on one side stood a saint, a saint must stand on the other, or two it may be, a greater and a less, and in each case right and left must be duplicates in number and even in size and attitude, that the perfect symmetry which their highly decorative frames or altar niches required, might be attained. That is the glory of the great mosaics, at the same time that it is their weakness, — their glory as decorations, as symmetrical masses of color and line, illuminating the great church, whose character they so unhesitatingly accepted, with their blaze of splendor.

But at the dawn of the Renaissance, we have seen, a new respect is felt for life, and it is impossible to give life its rights by any such simple scheme. In the first place, living beings are not wont to be entirely regular in their groupings. Moreover, it is impossible to arrange them all in a straight line and make a decorative pattern like a screen or grill. That is not the way living creatures do, and that life might have its rights, the more ambitious picture took the place of the flat outline decoration. Picture means depth, perspective, figures near and figures far, more or less over-lapping and other complication. It is obvious that the problem of composition was greatly complicated thereby, for it must be remembered, the need of composition did not in the least disappear. The earlier painters like Giotto, or still more, some of his feebler associates, were wont still to arrange their figures on the front of a shallow stage, and even to have them look round at the audience that each might be plainly seen. But increasingly the artists carved out a vast depth in their picture and struggled with the problem of regularity and design. Simple bi-lateral symmetry, that is, the duplication of left and right, of course has to go. A balance more subtle, but still potent and carefully studied, now takes its place. On the whole, the tendency is toward the concealment of composition; freedom has its way at the seeming expense of regularity and design, a certain compromise being inevitable. It is the era of picture, and its controlling law is life. Composition is still there, but obvious symmetry is avoided.

But when the picture was used to decorate an apartment like this, whose symmetry was impressive, whose bounding spaces were curves of beauty and of meaning, the old need of symmetry again was felt. Some felt it more, some less; none more than Raphael. His picture must be a decoration, yet just because he was a man of the Renaissance, it must also be a picture. The little one with which we began, Prudence, Force, and Moderation, is little more than a decoration,

sacrificing depth and complexity, but this was simpler. On the greater walls depth and space relations fore and aft are indispensable. How then shall we still secure the regularity, the sense of symmetry that is indispensable to a good decoration?

Two things are essential. We are looking into the picture supposedly from such a point that it stretches out not only before us, but somewhat beneath us. As an architect would say, we see not only its elevation, but its ground plan. Wherever the mind grasps a situation, the decorative feeling demands that it shall find order and symmetry. If therefore we look down upon a group of men or other objects, we look for a symmetrical arrangement among them. It is not that we want to see their heads arranged in a symmetrical manner, the middle one, the highest, and so on. It is not merely a perpendicular symmetry that we are interested in, but where we can plainly see or feel a ground plan, we want to find symmetry there. At the same time, as we stand off and look at the picture as a whole, seeing the upper part above us and the lower part below us, we cannot wholly ignore the fact of its perpendicular arrangement. The grouping of the whole upon the wall must again have its symmetry of the old-time mediæval art. Freedom there may be, fore and aft, but in the upright plan of vision these things must still make something of a pattern. We must therefore have two kinds of composition. Perhaps we shall understand them best if we say "perpendicular composition" and "horizontal composition." Our people or other objects must be so arranged that as they loom up before us they will be symmetrical or orderly as an upright mass or design, and yet must likewise be so arranged that as we conceive of them scattered over a horizontal surface they will there too be symmetrical and orderly. Perhaps we may best get the idea from a great cathedral. We stand at the central entrance and look down the pillared aisle. The arches in diminishing lines

stretch far down toward the altar which catches our eye and holds it as the center of vision. Take what we see as an upright mass before us, and it is perfectly symmetrical. There are the tall pillars on either side, crowned with the great arch above, and so on down. But, in turn, we are also perfectly conscious that the pillars are arranged symmetrically upon the floor that spreads out before us in a great horizontal. Here, too, there is symmetry which we feel perhaps quite as much as we do the upright symmetry of the pillars and arches that loom before us. It would be a sorry cathedral that should have a confused ground plan, even though the masses arranged themselves in the upright plane of vision in a symmetrical manner. We should feel the ground plan irregular just the same.

Here then lies Raphael's crowning triumph. He has, to be sure, given us certain things that lend themselves but feebly to a scheme of decorative arrangement, the distant landscape on either side, even the group of people in the foreground, but while there is some compromise with the inevitable freedom of nature, the compromise is not a contradiction. These people, if not absolutely regularly arranged, are sufficiently so, as nearly so as they could be without seeming to lose their freedom and their character. The landscape, too, is as regular as it is in the nature of landscapes to be. But now as we look upward into the heavens, Raphael has freely broken with all natural tradition, and the clouds build themselves into curving platforms and shadowy domes, assuming cherubic forms without change of their shadowy substance.

The great picture upon the other side, the so-called School of Athens (C 167), is another example of the same sort. Here we have an architectural background, giving us a symmetry very much of the cathedral sort before mentioned, and again groups of figures that without any mathematical precision group themselves in that freer symmetry that life as we know it permits. This wall may be taken as the ideal example of

C 167, School of Athens. Camera della Segnatura, Vatican, Rome. Raphael, 1483–1520.

the pictorial decoration of the Renaissance. Unlike the flat decorations of the Middle Ages, this decoration does not leave the wall in thought in its true place, but compels us to think it quite away. In this respect it is pictorial. But unlike most pictures, it does not give us a vague and uncertain depth beyond, but a definite and symmetrical one. In this sense it is akin to architecture and so to decoration. Into this space is projected the principle of symmetry in two dimensions, a complicated application of a familiar decorative principle. This composition in two dimensions bears the same relation to composition in one dimension that solid geometry bears to plane geometry. We have only to add that as the principle of symmetry may be applied to two dimensions instead of one, so the more subtle principle of balance may be applied to relations of two dimensions. By the time we get this far, we get beyond all ordinary power of analysis. It is doubtful whether the painter himself ever fully calculates the result of so complex a problem. He rather feels his way, guided, none the less, by an instinctive feeling for the relations mentioned.

It is hardly necessary to add that this complex system of symmetry is really less decorative than the simpler composition in a single plane in use in the Mediæval art. It does not emphasize and beautify the building, or wall, as the architect gives it to us, but rather obliterates it from our consciousness, substituting for it a space of different shape and character. It does this because it needs the room for its figures and its incidents to arrange themselves in a natural way. As a sort of concession to the architect whose work it has enfeebled or destroyed, it arranges its own creations in a symmetrical manner, though somewhat against their nature. The whole system, therefore, is one of intrinsic compromise. The mosaicist made no concession to life. Decoration was supreme. The extreme modern realist makes no concession to decoration, rejects all symmetries, and gives full sway to

life. Raphael is the best example of a middle ground, each interest making the necessary concessions, but so cleverly calculated that neither architecture nor life seems aggrieved.

All the great painters or frescoers of the Renaissance struggled with this same problem. There was never a fresco-painter who did not realize that he must fill his space and that there were good ways and bad ways of filling it. Yet, on the whole, throughout the entire Renaissance, they cared more for the character they were portraying, for story telling, than they did for the symmetry of the building they were ostensibly trying to express and emphasize. On the whole, the Renaissance is pictorial rather than decorative, the Mediæval art decorative rather than pictorial. Only in the work of Raphael in a very high sense can we say that the more complex and ambitious scheme of pictorial decoration was fully achieved. There are and always will be those who doubt the wisdom of such an attempt. Certainly the small percentage of success gives some justification to the doubt. The picture as such is designed to make the necessary concessions and to leave the wall one hundred per cent wall. It weakens and enfeebles what it is set to beautify by somewhat immodestly offering its own beauty by way of compensation. This is the history of the Renaissance and of much of our modern art as well. The experiment, whether wise or not, was one of colossal difficulty, and in Raphael's work at last it was markedly successful.

It is with less enthusiasm that we turn to another phase of Raphael's work. What has Raphael told us in these pictures? What is his message? There are many who would resent such a question. It is but fair not to press it too far. Yet it is certain that Raphael did not deprecate comparison between Michelangelo and himself on this ground as well as other. We have noticed the arbitrary character of the figures denominated Prudence, Force, and Moderation. There is nothing about them to suggest these names. They are

merely charming figures, charmingly arranged, decoration pure and simple. As we turn now to the Discussion of the Sacrament, the theme becomes weightier, the message much more imperatively demanded. We have the Christ and God the Father. But compare it with Michelangelo's Creator, who hurls the sun from his finger or touches the new-formed man to life. Compare it well. Comment is unnecessary; benignant old age, but not divinity. Still less the Christ; almost feminine in delicacy but inconceivable as the symbol of divine intervention in humanity's behalf. Or turn to the School of Athens, splendid group as it is, and recall names that the world delights to honor, Socrates and Plato, Archimedes and Zeno. The list is the most glorious that any time or place can offer. But is it Philosophy that is represented here? There are some worthy figures bearing philosophers' names; there is symbolism in figure and grouping. There is Mathematics, we are told; certainly that was Raphael's intention. We have actually a likeness of Raphael's friend, Bramante, writing upon a slate around which are gathered a group of lovely boys. It is conceivable that all of these girlish figures might master something of that complex art, but if so, the contradiction between face and achievement would enhance the wonder of the result. It is impossible to conceive figures less suggestive of an abstruse science like mathematics. Nor is the painting of Parnassus (C 164) upon the opposite wall, with its glorious company of poets, from Homer down to Dante and his famous peers, more adequate. There is an impressive loveliness about the gentle god and the Muses grouped about him. The Muse who sits near by, white-robed and exquisite, is a creation worthy of Raphael's refinement and taste, but is only a feeble reminiscence of the mighty strain of poetry that has come down to us through all the ages. A figure for Watteau to paint upon a fan for a Marie Antoinette, this exquisite creature, but not one to symbolize the mighty music of Dante, the wrath of Achilles,

C 164, Parnassus. Camera della Segnatura, Vatican, Rome. Raphael, 1483–1520.

or the Pean to which the hoplites charged at Marathon. There is sterner stuff in the world's music, in the world's art, than anything these creatures can represent. It is art in lighter vein that these Muses suggest. It is, let us concede without harshness, art in lighter vein of which our artist is the exponent.

The following Stanze show Raphael's rapid degeneration, yet the degeneration is not wholly his. His own handiwork is increasingly difficult to trace, the work of helpers increasingly evident. A fresco consists essentially of three processes. The first is a sketch. The space to be filled is indicated in smaller scale in exact proportions and the sketch drawn in to enable the artist to decide what is best adapted to the space in question. This sketch, so to speak, merely determines the theme, the number and character of the figures, the composition in its broader outlines. It is purely a preparatory study on the artist's part. The sketch once complete, the cartoon comes next. This is the picture complete as regards outline and detail. It is made full size on large pieces of paper, and then the outline is punctured much as for an embroidery pattern which is to be stamped with blueing upon the fabric. For when it comes to the painting itself, it must be executed with lightning rapidity. There is no possibility of experiment. You cannot draw lines and then change and erase. The line must be perfectly determined beforehand. This is done by means of the cartoon. The cartoon once ready, a small portion of the space, such portion as the artist thinks it possible to cover in a limited time, is covered with fresh plaster, and the cartoon, or the appropriate section of it is fastened up. With a bag of blueing or other pigment, it is pounced on, that is, the bag is passed over the punctured outlines and dots of color are left upon the wet plaster which guides the painter in his work. The cartoon now removed, the painting is done with the utmost possible despatch. Essentially all the color must be laid on while the plaster

is still moist. It thus penetrates the plaster, and as the latter hardens by crystallizing, the color is incorporated in the substance of the plaster itself. Only slight finishing touches may be put on after the plaster is dry. The next day another section is covered in the same way, and so on until the work is finished.

There is every temptation in a work of this kind to the employment of helpers, a temptation to which even Michelangelo was disposed to yield, but which he ultimately resisted. The character of Raphael's art and of Raphael himself insures a different result. With different purpose, infinite suavity, the affection of all who worked with him, and it must be confessed, a far simpler task before him, it was easy for a helper to coöperate successfully in the hurried process of transfer to the wet plaster. Not that such help would be used indiscriminately. The faces, the more important figures or parts, would naturally be the work of the artist himself, but indifferent detail, of which the great pictures of the Renaissance contained abundance, especially architectural, all this could be put in by a trained helper with reasonable satisfaction.

As we study Raphael's farther work, the use of the helper becomes apparent. Thus the Delivery of Peter from Prison, one of the loveliest of Raphael's conceptions, will strike anyone familiar with Raphael's painting as not being quite the usual color. In conception and drawing it is perfect; it is very like Raphael; but the color is redder, perhaps we may say, a little more rank, less subtle, than the artist is wont to use. This conclusion is not difficult, and is indeed justified by indubitable evidence, that Raphael did not put this painting upon the wall at all. He prepared the sketch, and then the cartoon, but having long depended upon helpers for parts, he came at last to turn over to them the last processes complete. We can readily understand the inevitable deterioration which would thus result. The helper, working

no longer beside the master, only under his occasional supervision, was freer to choose his color, freer indeed in all respects than before. One so exacting as Michelangelo would never have tolerated such coöperation, would have repudiated it even after it began, but Raphael was of a different mould.

This same double character is visible in the Fire in the Borgo (M 2), the Vision of Attila, the Expulsion of Heliodorus, and the later Stanze generally. They do not compare with the Disputà in refinement and delicacy.

But the end was not yet. Raphael was unfortunately too popular, too busy. He was sought by art lovers everywhere. He was sought for other things than art. He was popular socially. He was a scholar, and was deeply interested in preserving the ancient monuments of Rome, then far more numerous than now. He soon became the official archæologist of Rome. He was enmeshed to some degree in the interests of the church. There was a rumor of a possible Cardinal's hat, had not death come too promptly. All in all, the commissions offered, and perhaps imprudently accepted, were far beyond the limits of his individual resources. Hence this using of helpers for the last stage altogether, and then, unfortunately, the using of helpers for the intermediate stage as well. The Stanze themselves perhaps give us no example of this further debauching of Raphael's art. We must go to the Villa Farnesina, which we may without too much regret omit if time be pressing, to find this further dilution of Raphael's art. Here in the spandrils of the arches above, Raphael has arranged with his usual cleverness figures admirably adapted for the purpose, arranging them himself, but the work is not his own. We have a sketch, declared by experts to be by Raphael's hand, but comparing it with the fresco itself we find it is but remotely similar. He made the sketch, and then, as the fresco plainly bears witness, left to someone else the entire responsibility of its further execution. That someone is now not doubtful, one Giulio by name, the

M 2, Fire in the Borgo. Camera dell' Incendio, Vatican, Rome. Raphael, 1483–1520.

only artist that Rome ever produced, and hence called Giulio Romano, Julius the Roman. To Giulio was left the work of executing both cartoon and fresco. He could have chosen no more unworthy hand; grossly facile, but indelicate and uninventive, Julius represented the artisanship of painting in its least inspired form. It was the fault, no doubt, of overzealous patrons that Raphael's art was thus debauched, but we cannot wholly exonerate the artist who willingly lent his name to work for which he furnished but the preliminary sketch and for which he drew the pay. There has been much mourning over the untimely death of Raphael, but had he died five years sooner his name would have been held in higher honor.

There is little to be said in praise of the later walls of the Stanze. The Miracle of Bolsena is by far the best, but aside from an excellent portrait of Julius II and certain clear indications that Raphael was now attempting to assimilate the Venetian manner, it has no great interest. The Expulsion of Heliodorus and the Story of Attila are mediocre works, Raphael's part in which we should be glad to minimize. As we pass round to the great Hall of Constantine, the last vestige of Raphael's influence disappears. Bigger walls and more numerous figures, but now in vulgar and meaningless confusion, are the sorry outcome of this work begun so auspiciously, a work scoring such striking triumphs and ending in such humiliating demoralization.

It is impossible to read the story of Raphael in Rome, with any justice, without keeping constantly in mind the great background of his thought, indeed of the thought of all men at this time,—the mighty Michelangelo. Who could have lived in Rome in the days when the Prophets and the Sibyls burst upon men's vision, and be uninfluenced by this man, supreme in his art? It was the very greatness of Michelangelo that he dwelt among the conflicting influences of his time, himself little modified. He had a minimum of ability to assimilate

the thoughts, the suggestions, the spirit of other men. That which would have been to another man a misfortune was for him a salvation. Raphael was his exact opposite. There is scarce a picture in the long series that he has given us in which we cannot trace the influence of some contemporary artist. His genius was distinctly a genius for assimilation. But unlike the usual imitator and assimilator, when he repeated the work of another man he ordinarily improved upon it. Nothing at first sight would seem more original than the strange combination of dome and platform clouds, distant landscape and cathedral floor, in the Disputà. It is unique whatever may be said about it, is our first reflection. But we are astonished to find that even this is not Raphael's invention, but taken from a similar work by Fra Bartolommeo, of all his contemporaries the one whom Raphael seems to have loved. Other works show his influence, still others that of Leonardo, as we have seen, many, of course, the influence of Perugino. In addition to the Miracle of Bolsena, a number of his later works are deeply stamped with the character of the Venetian art which only in this later day came to the fuller consciousness of Rome.

But among all those whom Raphael thus felt impelled to assimilate and to vie with, none exercised an influence so great and none an influence so baneful as Michelangelo. We have noticed Raphael's attempt to rival the Titanic nude of the great artist in his Fire in the Borgo, where the Titanic nude became preposterous for lack of reason or spiritual content. This, however, gave rise to other attempts at rivalry if not of deliberate imitation. The little picture in the Pitti Gallery at Florence, known as the Vision of Ezekiel, is a startling reminder of Michelangelo's Creation of the Sun and the Moon; a startling reminder, yet a pitiful contrast. There is the same erect figure, the same streaming hair and flowing beard, the same knit eyebrows. But the arms are stretched out, not with the energy of creative omnipotence, but in the

helplessness of old age. They are supported on either side by charming cherubic creatures who, shorn of all the dignity that characterizes Michelangelo's accompanying figures, play hide and go seek round the Creator, whose senile impotence they are seemingly set to supplement. At first glance, Michelangelo's; at second glance a sorry misapplication of Raphael's own cherubic charm.

But the end was not yet. One can imagine with what intensity of interest the youthful painter followed the great Julius and his coterie of friends into the Sistine Chapel that day when Michelangelo's story of Creation was first uncovered before their astonished gaze, and again that later day, when the Sibyls and Prophets were at last revealed to view. These Sibyls were indeed the triumph of the age, so Raphael must have thought. The desire to emulate this great work deeply possessed Raphael, and he availed himself of the first opportunity to paint the Sibyls. In the little church of Santa Maria della Pace near by, the opportunity was found. The fresco occupies an irregular space, one least suited to pictorial composition, but one where Raphael's facility in that respect was sure to score an easy triumph; indeed, his art has known no better. There is the inevitable Raphael quality in these cupid-like figures, the one holding the torch above, the one whose roguish face rests upon his hand; these are perfectly charming. Not without the usual charm, too, are the Sibyls themselves, the younger of them at least, where Raphael's feeling for serene beauty found its better opportunity. Nor can anything surpass the ease and unexpected plausibility with which they group themselves in this untoward space. Charm, grace, beauty, all this, yes; but Sibyls, never. Look at this oval-faced blonde who occupies the space at the left, a charming ball-room figure, but is there a hint here of the responsibility of prophecy, the pathos of the message, the inexorable will of the Most High? Or look at the Cumæan Sibyl, — alas for such a contrast, — who occupies the space

at the right. Sharp-featured, glittering eyed, sunken cheeked, she is the quintessence of insignificance and of gossiping garrulity. Nothing could better disclose Raphael's total incapacity to deal with those mighty thoughts that were Michelangelo's daily companions.

Unsatisfactory as are many of the works of this later period, it must not be forgotten that Raphael's genius is also manifest, and that it gave in this period some of the most valuable of his creations. Indeed, the only works in which we detect a true creative originality worthy of comparison with that of Leonardo and Michelangelo, date from this time. Such are the Madonna of the Chair, with its happiest of compositions motived by the most beautiful of sentiments, the Saint Cecilia of Bologna, in which the commonplace conception of a woman who displays her musical skill to a wondering audience, is reversed, and the saint alone among the assembled company, listens to the music of the heavenly choir, or finally, the incomparable Sistine, unique among Madonnas both in the manner and the spiritual significance of the theme. Pure and limpid as was the inspiration of Raphael in the earlier Leonardo days, his achievements were marked by no such creative imagination as characterizes these works. That the passion for assimilation which worked out so happily in contact with the gentle Perugino and the inspired Leonardo, should have wrought less happily in contact with Michelangelo, whose genius was most at home beyond the limits of normal art and in a field where any but he would be a trespasser, should not blind us to the fact that this power of assimilation was unique, amounting in the case of Raphael to positive genius. If it deluded Raphael into painting the Fire in the Borgo, it inspired him to paint the Madonna of the Goldfinch. The assimilative genius of Raphael, after all, has nothing worse to its count than the creative genius of Michelangelo. The one gift was as exceptional, and like all exceptional gifts, as dangerous as the other. In his effort

to assimilate and fuse into a perfect whole all the varying individual styles of this creative age, Raphael attempted the impossible, but not more than did Leonardo in the field of science. The striving for universality was the weakness, as it was also the greatness of the age. Such an age produces great personalities and little in the way of finished personal achievement. Raphael attempted the impossible in his own particular way, and failed in his own particular way, as the others did in theirs; but like the others, he made himself a part of that great spiritual achievement which means so much more to us than all the Stanze and the Madonnas, more even than the Prophets and the Sibyls, the far reach of the soul in the Renaissance.

If we turn from Raphael's temperament to the circumstances which so largely conditioned his action, our feeling is at first one of extreme regret. It is difficult to reconcile ourselves to the hot-house pressure put upon Raphael's development by the cabals and feuds of the time, to the depraved taste which demanded strident and sensational effects from this painter of the exquisite, to the superficiality which accepted the coarse work of Giulio Romano if signed by the more popular name; above all we regret that the collaboration thus unwisely forced upon Raphael should have been of the vulgar type which the pervading atmosphere of Roman life could breed, and that this association should ultimately have coarsened the fiber of the painter himself. But again, we are dealing with a fact nowise exceptional. Michelangelo was hardly more favored in Rome. Fortunately, his one great work was rushed headlong through to completion, before his inspiration, born of the purer air of Florence, was sullied or spent. Fortunately, again, he was not popular, and the long half century following the completion of the Sistine Ceiling brought him few opportunities for the inevitable descent to Avernus. But the few works which record to us the progress of his thought and of his ideals are painful

reminders that even his taciturn and isolated spirit was not exempt from the influence of this debauching environment. Unquestionably art flowed far more limpid and pure at its fountain head in Florence or in gentle Umbria, than in the turbid stream of cosmopolitan Rome.

Yes, but is it in some favored Florence or Umbria that art accomplishes its mission? Life is more undefiled in the monastery than in the market place, but should it therefore remain in the monastery? It is folly to seek for art or for righteousness conditions of development which rob it of its value and its use. The ripened art of Florence lost nothing by being plucked for the use of a sodden world. Unplucked, it would have rotted upon the parent stem. Rome offered to art no subtle inspiration or discriminating guidance; she offered rather a world to be refined and saved. Chaotic in her impulses, limitless in her resources, and tyrannical in her power, Rome epitomized the humanity to which art must always make its appeal. That in this Babel of conflicting impulses and undefined ideals, the message of art was often confused or heard awry is not strange. It is, after all, this same Babel which must be won from confusion to order by unconscious adjustment to the rhythmic accents of art. Not once, but a thousand times, the ideals of art shall be defiled and perish by this same contaminating contact, but not a thousand times, no, nor once, shall they perish in vain.

It is a pleasant task to turn from the demoralization which Raphael suffered, to the elevating influence which he exercised upon this new world art of the Roman Renaissance. We have seen his contribution to such difficult problems as pictorial decoration, contributions not merely technical, by any means, but it is impossible not to expect from the painter of the Madonna of the Goldfinch or the Sistine, something more definitely expressive of the spiritual serenity which it was his to interpret. We do not find it in his ill-advised adventures into Michelangelo's field; we look for it often in

vain under the obscuring veil of Giulio Romano's handicraft. Let us not look so narrowly to details of figure or face. Rather let us look back in long perspective at the great walls of the Segnatura, at the Deliverance of Peter, yes, even at the Sibyls and at many another which, taken by itself, seems but the travesty of an incongruous theme. Let us forget the idiosyncrasies of the theme and note only the spirit which, appropriately or not, is common to them all. It is the same spirit that we knew and loved in the earlier day, a spirit which, hitherto expressed in the face of the Madonna, was now called upon to harmonize the vast compositions which were the product of the age. Into the turmoil of Roman life Raphael brings a spirit of imperturbable serenity and calm. The philosophers of Athens, the worshipers of the host, the Muses upon Parnassus, the liberated Peter, all have the serenity of God's own angels and bear with them the charmed spirit of peace. If this spirit is strangely dissonant in a Vision of Ezekiel or a Sibyl burdened with the message of God's displeasure, the dissonance is not Raphael's. It is but the discord which the surrounding din makes against the music of his art. That his message was heard and welcomed even by those least in harmony with it, there is abundant proof. That he was largely sacrificed to the conditions of Roman patronage and life, is indubitable, but the sacrifice was neither gratuitous nor vain. It was but a part of that universal sacrifice which is incidental to utilization. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it beareth much fruit."

CHAPTER XV

ART IN THE SCHOOL OF LORENZO AND SAVONAROLA

AGAIN our quest takes us to Florence, the goal of all inquiry in these later days of art. For long the drama was enacted wholly within her walls, and as later, the scene widens and we make our long excursions with Leonardo and Raphael to Milan, to Rome, to France, we are each time compelled to return to the little city to find the source of the new impulse which energizes the new and ever greater act. We now return for the greatest and the last.

The reverent pilgrim to the shrine of art threads his thoughtful way from the busy center of art out along the Via Ghibellina to the Casa Buonarroti, thinking there to find the closest associations with the life of Michelangelo. He is prone, even, to speak of the place as the "Michelangelo House," misled by the family name. He is mistaken. The great sculptor never made this his home, and those to whom it owes its name were but unworthy relatives who burdened his generosity. His parental home and the place of his later occasional residence we seek in vain. Yet, strangely enough, we scarcely associate him in our thought with the only place where residence was of special significance to him, a place of perfectly accredited sojourn amid personalities and surroundings that were big with import. That place is naught less than the great Riccardi Palace, the home of the Medici and one of the most splendid palaces ever built. Here in the companionship of chosen scholars, philosophers, artists and poets, and surrounded by art objects of every description, the most gifted son of Florence spent two years of his impressionable youth as a veritable son of the greatest art patron who ever lived.

The circumstances leading to this remarkable experience have been so often narrated that we need allude to them but briefly; the poverty of the parental home both in material goods and in spiritual sympathy, the father's pride in his doubtful nobility and his foolish prejudice against all gainful pursuits, his reluctant consent that the boy should be a painter, and his despair when he chose to be a "stone cutter" instead, all this is but a dramatic foil to the splendid opportunity so soon to open before him. All have heard, too, of the brief apprenticeship in Ghirlandajo's studio, fruitful in spite of its doubtful harmony and its feeble inspiration, and of the teacher's more than willing response to the request of Lorenzo that the unmanageable pupil should be transferred to Bertoldo's school of sculpture in the garden of San Marco, where, after a brief apprenticeship, the famous Faun Mask was to attract the attention and win the favor of the great Magnifico. It is less important to narrate again circumstances so familiar than it is to picture clearly to our minds the conditions under which the boy lived in this most remarkable household.

There have been many princely patrons of art, but surely never another like Lorenzo de' Medici. Other patrons have been free with their bounty, with their friendship and their time, but hardly another has carried his favor to the extent of full family adoption. Such was literally the practice of Lorenzo. Under his roof dwelt in this fullest family intimacy, representatives of those varied branches of art and learning which it was his enlightened pleasure to foster. Each had his room with appropriate belongings and suitable provisions for his wants, even a liberal allowance of spending money. Most noteworthy of all, each had absolutely the privileges of sons in the family, the ruling principle in which was freedom and unconventional intimacy. It was the rule of the household that whoso came first to meals sat next to the Magnifico himself, and the others following in order of arrival. Such arrangement assured not only frequent access to Lorenzo,

but the fullest possible mixing and acquaintance among this remarkable company. When we recall that each of these adopted members of the household was a remarkable man and positive personality, the wonder grows that this supreme master of men should have been able to dominate such a household without repression or conventional restraint.

It was into such a household that this soul-starved boy of fifteen was transferred from the cramped parental household, where a sickly mother, a large group of selfish and worthless brothers, and a narrow and stubborn father found a grievance in his passion for art. From childhood, we are told, he had been beaten for this passion which none of his family understood, and which to the end they appreciated only as a means of filling the family purse. No association with the uninspired Ghirlandajo or the old hack, Bertoldo, who guided his studies in the garden, could have prepared him for a transition so momentous.

Among the members of this Table Round to which Michelangelo was now admitted, were men to whom the world is more indebted than its short memory suggests. Such was Luigi Pulci, the raciest of humorists and popular poets, Angelo Poliziano, the most polished classical scholar and finished poet of his time and the highest representative of the humanist philosophy, Pico della Mirandola, the great Oriental scholar, and Marsilio Ficino, the great Platonist, whose dream it was to unite the philosophy of this greatest of Greek minds with the teachings of the Christian faith. Not one of these was without influence upon the youthful Michelangelo, who, with all his ruggedness of character, was at this age like clay in the potter's hands. When we read his sonnets of a later time, whose grander strains are relieved at times by a touch of the burlesque, we are reminded of this association with Poliziano and even with Pulci. Above all, when we see how Christian themes, which had become in the art of the humanist painters the emptiest of dead forms, now live again with a

vaster meaning which transcends all old-time dogma, we are reminded of Ficino and of the favorite discussions in which he was but the leader among this company of the elect. It was characteristic of Michelangelo to grasp the larger truth underlying the local forms of dogma, and this was precisely what Ficino and the Platonists of the Florentine Academy sought to accomplish. They had at least one convert. Michelangelo, always a devout Christian, was all his life in belief a Christian Platonist, and he has immortalized in his art this much neglected achievement of the Renaissance.

To this wonderful environment of personality we must add the hardly less influential environment of finished art by which the boy was now surrounded. The palace was filled with every variety of art, from the most trifling bric-a-brac to the masterpieces of the greatest artists. There were coins and vases and gems, tapestries and pictures and bas-reliefs; there were statues in marble and bronze, works of the unknown ancients, and of the great Florentines who had so lately emulated them. Almost every great artist whom we have studied had worked for this illustrious house, and the palace contained reminders of their presence. Among these incomparable suggestions Michelangelo was no passive spectator. It is recorded that the Magnifico himself was in the habit of discussing these things with him, both asking his judgment and expressing his own. When it is remembered that Lorenzo's patronage of art was as discriminating as it was generous, that in taste and the perception of beauty he was easily first among the wonderful company that he gathered about him, the value of this friendship can be imagined. Was there ever a school like that of Lorenzo?

But another and a greater teacher was at hand. Already in the second year of Michelangelo's sojourn in the great palace, Florence was stirred by the voice of the mighty monk who was so soon to be the controlling factor in her destiny. He had been in Florence eight years before, but all unnoticed. In the

meantime he had discovered a new power, and Florence a new want. Certain it is that all eyes were now turned toward the most remarkable preacher whom history records. All Florence began to stream to San Marco, and then to the great Duomo, whose vast depths themselves could scarce accommodate the throng of the curious and soon of the conscience-stricken, impelled by that strange hunger which men feel for the words of condemnation and of doom. Is it that only the messenger of condemnation can be the messenger of grace?

It goes without saying that such a phenomenon would not pass unnoticed in the great palace. If the intellectual alertness and broad tolerance of the Table Round had not insured the newcomer a hearing, the amazing boldness of his allusions to this same palace and its princely head would have insured their lively interest. But we shall quite misjudge the temper of a Ficino or a Poliziano, yes, even of a Lorenzo, if we imagine them moved with petty jealousy or resentment. Tolerance of the most absolute character had long been the fixed rule of this wonderful household, and the masterly skill of Lorenzo made recourse to the dark arts of suspicion and repression both unnecessary and repugnant. Doubtless the monk made him uneasy, but this was but one of a thousand problems which had taxed the skill which it was his pleasure to exercise. Finally, we must not imagine from the furious invectives of Savonarola or from the known moral laxity of the Medicean palace that the attitude of the table or of its head was altogether unsympathetic toward the message that was now thundered from the pulpit of the great Duomo. Doubtless these practical manipulators of men were incredulous as to the feasibility of the universal regeneration so peremptorily demanded, incredulous even as to its entire practicability for their individual selves, but the ideals of the stern monk were not theoretically at odds with those of a Ficino or a Lorenzo. There was a large place for a Savonarola in the hearts of these

men, along with other idealists whom they honored. Alas, he seemed to demand a place to the exclusion of all others.

This family of the elect heard Savonarola. It is to one of their members, Pico della Mirandola, that we are chiefly indebted for our knowledge of his power. Beyond question, therefore, Michelangelo was among his hearers. For three years, from the age of sixteen to nineteen, he was under this most potent of influences. During the first of these three years he still dwelt in the great palace, but the master mind was now relaxing its grip. Disease was doing its fatal work, and the head of the table was doubtless often absent from the seat which he was soon to vacate forever. Upon his death, at the end of this first year of the great monk's preaching, Michelangelo left the great palace to return to the cheerless home of his childhood. Under these changed conditions we can imagine the increasing ascendency of the mighty preacher. It is not simply that Michelangelo was young, and that he was under the influence of a preacher whose power was unprecedented and whose appeal was well nigh universal. There was between the two men a temperamental sympathy, unnoticed as yet, but already clearly indicated, which was soon to be fully revealed in Michelangelo's master work. Minor points of agreement we note in their instinctive asceticism and their passionate intensity, but new points of agreement rapidly developed. In strange conflict with his Medicean affinities, Michelangelo responded with all the passionate intensity of his nature to the stern monk's appeal for liberty and popular government and for purity in public and private life. This meant beyond question the end of the Medicean rule, and Michelangelo, though still sustaining relations of friendship to members of this illustrious house, ever after appears as a passionate opponent of their rule in Florence. Thus were laid the foundations of the great life conflict which was to play so momentous a part in his later life. Feeling the sense of obligation as strongly as he felt all other things, he

could never absolve himself from his obligation to a house whose favor he had thus unwittingly accepted. And, in turn, feeling with ten-fold intensity the need of liberty for the realization of manhood, he learned from Savonarola while yet in his teens, to execrate the family which had been chiefly instrumental in its suppression. The school of Savonarola had supplanted the school of Lorenzo, not undoing its work, for such influences can never be effaced, but changing the earlier perspective and crowning all with its own titanic spiritual ideals.

We naturally look with eagerness among the works of Michelangelo for reminders of this earliest time. They are not wanting, though they are left to tell their own story with little help from contemporary records. The Faun Mask of the Bargello, often questioned, but for no very convincing reason, recalls his first meeting with Lorenzo and his quick and deft adoption of the latter's suggestion that a tooth or two be knocked out, which won him the invitation to the palace. It is said to have been made for his own amusement from a piece of waste marble begged for the purpose. Probably enough, but back of these surface facts, we may doubtless trace the influence of the arid Bertoldo, that practical craftsman, whose youthful association with the great Donatello and his abject homage to the antique were doubtless responsible for his appointment to this important post. Without contradicting tradition, we may perhaps see in this choice of a subject a suggestion from Bertoldo, whose extant works include a setting of classical bric-a-brac for Donatello's Passion of the Lord, and slavish copies of battle scenes from degenerate Roman sarcophagi for no purpose whatever.

More significant among Michelangelo's earliest works is the so-called Battle of the Centaurs (C 439) of the Casa Buonarroti, an unfinished relief which we might again attribute to the suggestion of Bertoldo, did we not know that in this case we are dealing with the greater Poliziano. Just what

C 439, Combat of Centaurs with Lapiths. Casa Buonarroti, Florence.
Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

portion of the Greek myth is here represented is uncertain,—and of no consequence. Although a production of Michelangelo's extreme youth, it is an epoch-making work, holding the place in sculpture which Leonardo's early works hold in painting. It claims our careful attention.

Reverting for a moment to Bertoldo's battle scene and to the sarcophagi which suggested it, we note that the traditional field is a long rectangle, that the figures are arranged of necessity on an approximate level, with a tendency to the formation of two or more rows. This arrangement which we may call zone composition, we recall, is identical with that prevailing in painting up to the time of Leonardo, a composition which has advantages as a decoration, but which for the intenser and more vital purposes of the Renaissance, is weak, lacking focus and concentration. This lack of focus would hardly have disturbed a Bertoldo, whose loyalty to the ancients was unquestioning, and who besides never had anything to focus. The scheme was doubtless held up as an exemplar to the young Michelangelo who has significantly departed from it. First of all, he has shortened the long rectangle to an approximate square, thus of necessity condensing the scene. This, characteristically enough, is noted by a modern critic, as a defect. The rows of heads may still be traced, the upper row distinctly and the others faintly and with noticeable interruptions. But the longer we gaze, the clearer it becomes that these zones are not the vital thing. Even the upper row, which is continuous in a sense, after all has a prominent head in the center, a less prominent head at each end, and heads in between which sink into lowest relief and withdraw into deep perspective. The prominence given to this central figure is immensely increased by the breaking of the second and lower lines, thus opening a center in which this figure is supreme. The prominence and the majesty of this central figure enable it to dominate the whole composition, which thus becomes a centered rather than a zone composition,

a solution of the problem different from Leonardo's, but recognizing the same need.

The center thus established, the whole composition must be adjusted to it. It will not do merely to make a gap in these rows and thrust in a prominent figure. In this adjustment we have the first proof of the sculptor's skill. The frame of our picture is square; the arrangement about the center would naturally be approximately round. The problem is to "break from the square into the round." On the left we have a series of masses arranged in perpendicular; then a youth who leans backward and the axis of whose body thus forms a line slanting outward; then a figure whose back furnishes another line sloping still more; then the arm of this same figure which increases the angle so that now it beautifully bounds or frames the central picture. The arm of the resisting woman starts the upward slope on the other side, which is continued by arms and heads most admirably arranged, both to express action in all its spontaneity, and to weave the border round the heroic figure that he has chosen to make so dominant. What induced the artist to leave such a masterpiece incomplete, we do not know, but very possibly because he had a vision of better things. Not only a new arrangement, but a new conception of sculpture is manifest in all later work. Not in crowded reliefs but in a few simple figures does he see its possibilities. We cannot pass this youthful work without noticing that it is much more than a study in technique. It is not merely sculpture; it is art, and thoroughly representative of the temperament later to be revealed in the great ceiling. Here is no fret and fume of little souls; all is deadly serious, but majestic, dignified. Here at the outset we encounter the same large-souled and life-weary Titans who up until the last, are ever ready at his call. Already he is Michelangelo.

One more work dates from this period, the beautiful Madonna of the Stair (C 440) in low relief, also in the Casa Buonarroti. Nothing can exceed the beauty of this relief,

C 440, Madonna of the Stair. Casa Buonarroti, Florence.
Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

its exquisite and unconventional draperies, the traditional head dress of the Madonna, now flung on with careless ease, the dimpled child at the breast, his pulpy arm bulged out against the mother's firmer wrist. The realism of the whole is startling. Yet this realism shrouds an idealism which never fails us in the sculptor's work. This is our first acquaintance with that large-souled creature whose thought so far transcends the homely surroundings and the object of mother love. Is this the ecclesiastical Madonna of the earlier art, with throne and saints and conscious accepted homage? Nothing could be farther from it than this scene of most intimate privacy, this unconventionality of garb and action. Is this then the nature Madonna, the embodiment of care free mother love and joy? Again the suggestion is remote. It is a new conception, the unconventional and the ordinary made the receptacle of the most extraordinary and exalted meaning.

There is a disposition to assign this to an earlier date than the Battle of the Centaurs, because of its simplicity and its resemblance to the low relief of Donatello, but our artist shows a consciousness of Donatello much later than this, and when we recall that the classical pressure of Bertoldo and Poliziano were strongest in the earlier period and that the influence of Savonarola waxed as theirs waned, we may safely see in this modest work the not unworthy record of the message of the great prophet.

With the expulsion of the Medici from Florence in 1494, Michelangelo, then a youth of nineteen, left Florence. Whatever his sympathies with Savonarola, there was little chance that the new condition of things would furnish employment to an artist, and we need not look farther than to his own need and the importunities of his impecunious family for an explanation of his departure. After an unsuccessful search for work in Venice, accident offered the desired opportunity in Bologna, where, in the old church of Saint Dominic stood one

of the most remarkable shrines in Italy, begun, as we long ago noted, by Niccolò Pisano, and now waiting, after important intermediate additions, for the finishing touch of Michelangelo. He was first employed to finish an uncompleted statuette upon the top, then other portions, and finally, to carve an angel to match one on the other side, executed by Niccolò da Bari (B 497) a few years before. This work, perhaps the first ever done for pay, marks the culmination of his youthful inspiration. It is best appreciated by comparison with the other of which it is necessarily the pendant. The earlier work was of singular beauty, the childlike face, the curling hair, the charming posture, but some things apparently did not meet the approval of the young Michelangelo. The draperies are very heavy, and the contrast of high-lights and shadows pronounced. In the interest of feathery realism, the wings are ruffled and their curving contour broken. The notch in the bent knee is unpleasantly sharp. All these defects are removed in the companion piece. The truer line of the wing, the softer outline at the knee, show plainly that Michelangelo remembers that the silhouette of his work is part of the outline of the shrine and must have its architectural comeliness. Above all, the softened treatment of the drapery, subdued and casting no sharp edged shadows, a treatment extending even to the face, is an admirable example of decorative subordination, an example unique in Michelangelo's work.

So far the changes made by Michelangelo are in the interest of decorative adaptation. A glance at the face, however, discloses a change which is susceptible of no such explanation. The face has that large eyed seriousness with its lurking hint of pathos with which the Madonna has more justly made us familiar. The change is in deference to Michelangelo's temperament which cannot dissociate beauty from this deeper spiritual suggestiveness. It is the noblest of themes in art, but one only moderately adapted to minor decorative works

B 497, Kneeling Angel with Candlestick, Shrine of St. Dominic. S. Domenico, Bologna. Niccolò da Bari, 1414–1494.

like this. But ungracious indeed must be the man who would press the point in such a presence.

Michelangelo's absence from Florence was brief, and but for this wonderful record in Bologna might pass unnoticed. He was soon back in Florence where the Savonarola régime seemed established, and relatives of his old-time patrons were found to give him employment with results that interest us little. More to our purpose would be, if we could know it, the record of his thoughts and feelings under the continued influence of the great preacher. If, as we have reason to believe, his attitude was one of increasing sympathy, we can imagine how violent must have been the transition as he found himself in 1496, at the age of twenty-one, in the city which was soon to claim him for its own.

From the first, Rome has been the vortex into which was drawn the talent and resource of the world. From the days of Cincinnatus, Rome laid the world under tribute, tribute of money and of toil, tribute of genius and of power. Always the center toward which these elements gravitated, she was a center in which they were never produced. The long list of Rome's great men, from the earliest days of the empire, is a list of provincials that contributed their genius to the maintenance of the prestige and power of the Eternal City. Her art was imported, whether made within her gates or not. That which was true in the days of Cæsar was as true in the days of Michelangelo. The while producing nothing, she was the goal toward which inevitably gravitated all that the world produced. Throughout the history of the Renaissance, even in that later period when the patronage of Rome was so munificent, not a single artist whose name is worthy of mention owned the parentage of Rome. None the less, not a single artist counted himself fully fortunate unless his career was rounded out by employment in this supreme center.

The opportunity which Michelangelo first found in Rome was one to justify our worst apprehensions. Patrons, broadly

recognized as the connoisseurs of art in their day, were in bondage to the antique. Already that little word "classical," which so many worship and so few understand, held the world in awe. This is no place to define that indefinable word. It may not be amiss to suggest that in the last analysis the thing that awes us in the classical is but a reminiscence of the Greek. The remotest echo of the ideals of Hellas has lent a charm to all that was associated with it, even to the least intelligent age. And this, beyond question, was the reason for the abject worship in which men bowed to the antique. The philosophy of Plato and Aristotle that to the minds of the cultured in this day had dimmed the lustre of the New Testament, the charm of Greek oratory, of Greek architecture, and, even more perhaps, the reverence for all things Greek which had never died in Italy from the time of Cæsar to the time of Lorenzo, all these gave to the antique a charm which, in the form in which they knew it, was not its due, for the antique as men then knew it was not the Greek but the Roman, a travesty and a caricature of Greek taste and Greek spirit. Where the Greek had Dionysus, his god of Inspiration symbolized by the inspiration of wine, the Romans saw only Bacchus, his counterpart, the god of Drunkenness. Where the Greek saw in the wondrous Aphrodite the symbol of the self-renewing power of nature, pure as the very foam of the sea from which she rose, the Roman saw his Venus, the embodiment of passion and lust. The abject works of Roman eclecticism were the legacy of the Italian Renaissance. Rarely if ever did the artist or the connoisseur of this time see the work of a Greek chisel. Such as revealed in any degree the Greek spirit, were seen through the thick veil of Roman copying, too often but a silly caricature. Yet at no period in the world's history was the dogma more absolute that art was of the ancients. Poor blind leaders of the blind, these connoisseurs, to whom the fate of Christianity's greatest artist was for a time entrusted, little dreamed that the

feeblest work Michelangelo ever executed was nobler than the best antique they ever knew. The story, possibly mythical, that is told of Michelangelo's advent to Rome, perfectly reveals the conditions under which he now must labor. He is said to have sent a statue of a sleeping Cupid to Rome as a sample of his work, but the dealer to whom it was entrusted decided to bury it and then to unearth it with the dirt sticking to it, and give it out for an antique. A connoisseur was imposed upon and added it to his collection, nothing doubting its authenticity. The discovery of the swindle won for the dealer the displeasure of his patron, but for the artist the necessary prestige and employment. The employment thus secured was at first of the most dubious kind — a Drunken Bacchus, subject chosen by a patron, treated by a Michelangelo; a marvel of skill but an infamy just the same; a Kneeling Cupid, again a skillful, enigmatical, uninspired work; and finally, with advancing respect, it won for him greater freedom and an opportunity possibly, at last, to choose his subject for himself. Whether self-chosen or otherwise, Michelangelo at last was privileged to treat a subject congenial to his temperament in the great Pietà (C 444), now the chief glory of St. Peter's.

The significance of this wonderful group is so great that every visitor to Rome should make it a subject of study. Probably few things that Michelangelo has done are studied less, and the reason is not strange to seek, for its significance is not of the kind that appeals to the casual observer. It is not, like most of Michelangelo's works, deeply charged with spiritual feeling. There is no inappropriate sentiment, nor is the work devoid of sentiment. Executed by another sculptor it would be only dignified and solemn, but to those that know Michelangelo's later work there is a higher height and a deeper depth which the Pietà does not reach.

The Pietà, a name applied, strictly speaking, to a group of two figures, the Mother mourning over the dead Christ, has

C 444, Pietà. S. Peter's, Rome. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

proved throughout Christian art an almost impossible subject. In addition to the obvious difficulties of expressing the sentiment of a mother on such an occasion, and adequately representing the corpse with proper distribution of emphasis, there are other difficulties which in painting have always been serious and in sculpture insuperable. First of all, there is the question of proper grouping or composition. It is quite a different problem in sculpture from what it is in painting. There is no frame around sculpture ordinarily, unless it be the larger setting of the place in which it is put. But there are other things to consider. First of all, sculpture is made of stone which is heavy and brittle. We are all perfectly familiar with that, and no real sculptor attempts to deceive us on that point. If he could measurably disguise his stone so as to deceive us as to its real character, he would lose more than he gained. This being the fact, and a fact of common knowledge, it follows that whenever we look at a statue we shall have a double consciousness. There will be in the first place the thought of man, woman, or whatever is there represented. This, of course, is what the artist is trying to give us. And there will be a consciousness in the background perhaps, but always there, that this is a stone. Now it is obvious that this latter consciousness ought to be kept in the background. It is not the purpose of the artist to keep us thinking about stone. We must know it and forget it as completely as possible. And the only way we can forget it is that the stone should be treated as stone. It will never do to try hazardous experiments with stone, for that will set us to thinking about the stone. For instance, when an artist carves leaves in stone, it will not do to carve them too thin. The moment he does that, the mind begins to marvel and wonder that stone can be cut so thin without breaking. Now this is not what the artist wants the mind to dwell upon, if he is a true artist at all. If he is merely an artisan, as unfortunately such stone carvers often are, then he will enjoy having us

marvel at his skill. But the artist wants us to think about his leaf, not about his cleverness in cutting the brittle stone. So he will not make it look too much like a leaf, but merely the hint of a leaf in stone, with great respect for the character of his stone. That is, to use a technical phrase which is sometimes useful, he will avoid natural forms and will make lithic forms, — stone forms, forms that will seem to the beholder to be quite possible for stone. It is better to hint at a leaf and not to arouse in the mind the thought of stone and its brittleness, than it is to fully express a leaf and chase away from the mind all thought about it.

The principle applies with great force to sculpture, especially to groups of sculpture in the round. When we carve a relief upon a slab of stone, the case is not quite the same. If we avoid any extravagant thinness or under-cutting, we can arrange the figures as we please, for since they adhere to the background we have no question as to their stability and are not prompted to indulge in such thoughts about them. But if we detach them from the background these problems at once become important. If they sprawl too much, stretching out arms and legs, there is first of all the danger that these will be broken off, as very often happens. But there is a worse danger than that, — the danger that we will stop and think about the possibility of their being broken off. Now the artist must at all costs prevent our stopping and thinking about anything except just the thought that he is trying to express in marble. There is always a tendency in the evolution of true sculpture toward an engrossing appreciation of what has been admirably called "integrity of mass," that is, sculptors like to have their groups bunched well together, broad, stable, solid, and offering a minimum of opportunity for accident and disaster. For one thing, a group of sculpture must never look as though it would tip over. If it does tip over, it and much else will suffer. No matter how well supported, if it suggests to the mind the thought of tipping

over, it will banish from the mind the thought of its beauty or meaning.

Now the compactness which is always desired in great sculpture is extremely difficult in the subject we have before us. In the Cathedral at Berne, for instance, there is a Pietà represented quite naturalistically, with the figure of the Christ stretched out prone in a long line upon the floor, and then the Mother standing at the head of the Christ, a straight figure, the picture of despair. But the eye cannot take in this group with any ease at all. Interest is divided between the head of the Christ, which is down at the bottom, and the head of the Mother which is at the top, and the long drawn out figure of the Christ is either quite neglected or sends the eye clear off on a side track. This suggests another difficulty quite different from the first and yet allied to it. Not only do we want the group to be massive and stable because it is stone and has the weight and brittleness of stone, but we also want the group to be so massed that all that is of interest can be seen by the eye at once and without serious effort. We have seen how carefully Leonardo sought this unified grouping in painting. It will not do for a moment for the artist merely to follow nature. Nature has no such exigencies. Not only are her figures made of something very unlike stone, but she can group and regroup at ease so that momentary deviation from this principle of compactness and visual unity does not trouble us. Living beings keep moving, and tell us through their motion what statues must tell us through repose. An artist may scatter his statues and make them look as though they were running about, but they will not run about, and he will not get the meaning that actual running about might convey. On the other hand, he will lose the meaning that he might secure through concentration and repose.

Whatever Michelangelo's theories on this subject, he feels the need, and at the same time realizes the difficulty of meeting it. He must have a compact mass, broad of base, and

with interest concentrated within the range of a single glance. Yet it is difficult to group a dead man and a living woman in this way. When we stop to think of it, we are startled at what Michelangelo has done. The figure of the dead Christ is placed in the mother's lap. It is an uncanny thought to translate that back into life. Imagine any possible circumstances in which a woman should hold the body of a man, no matter how beloved, in her lap. To a spectator it would be intolerable, the very limit of the inappropriate and the unpleasant. It is safe to say that such a thing would never happen. Yet by some strange necromancy, Michelangelo has done this without arousing these unpleasant suggestions. How has he done it?

First of all, he has obviously changed the proportions of the two figures. A man is in general considerably larger and heavier than a woman, yet in this case it is clear that the reverse is true. The figure of the mother is colossal and that of the Christ relatively small, yet this never occurs to us until we begin to analyze. Michelangelo perfectly knew that he was doing this, and yet seemed to realize that it could be done with impunity. As a matter of fact, it can be done, if the artist is skillful enough, without attracting notice. This the Greek understood perfectly. In the Parthenon Frieze we have men on horseback and men standing by their sides with their heads on the same level, the figure in the one case being twice the bulk of the other. Yet no one ever notices this except as the frieze is made the subject of analysis. It is a thing to be verified at a glance but never unpleasantly noticed. It is hard to tell just why this is possible in art. It is possibly due to the fact that we are accustomed to see the human figure represented in all possible scales, from tiny book illustrations up to heroic sized figures. We acquire the habit of instantly translating them into their usual size in our thought. This habit sufficiently acquired, we are able at last to do it with figures standing side by side. We never look at a pic-

ture in a book and say, "What a little man." We think of him as full size. This advantage is often a godsend to the artist, as in the case before us.

With this difference of proportion, the sense of intolerable burden is greatly relieved, but this alone would not accomplish the purpose. Michelangelo has resorted to another method, which in its subtlety of perception discloses him at once as an artist gifted with every resource. He has clothed the figure of the mother with voluminous drapery enormously massive and heavy. These garments spread out broadly at the base, furnishing the great mass of the group, giving it that breadth and tapering form which is the ideal to suggest to the mind the stability and repose which we long for in the static arts always, and most of all in those whose material is ponderous and heavy. But it is obvious that a woman clothed in very heavy garments could not better bear a weight than if clothed lightly. The garments rather form an additional burden. It is strange that these massive draperies should relieve our mind, which is troubled really only by suggestion drawn from life and not from stone at all. And here is where the juggling of our minds has to be reckoned with. As we said before, when we look at a statue we have a double consciousness. We think man and we think stone. Or rather, if we do not think these things, they are in the background of our mind as perfectly realized facts. They are totally distinct of course. A man is not a stone, and a stone is not a man, but the mind does not entirely distinguish them. If we so build a stable mass with drapery, or no matter what, the mind will have a feeling of stability and assurance as it gazes upon the mass of stone, and that will counteract the feeling of intolerable burden or weight suggested in connection with persons. Michelangelo has splendidly massed his group and given to it what we may call stone stability. Our stone consciousness feels in an instant that this great mass can bear up anything. Our person consciousness is not

satisfied, but these two are more or less merged in our feeling, and so the stone draperies that could support a building seem to help the frail woman's form to bear this heavy burden. Such juggling goes on continually, and the artist who is resourceful continually takes advantage of the stone consciousness to help out the person consciousness, thus deviating widely from nature for the very reason that art is not nature and that the conditions of its expression are peculiar to it.

Certain other things about this remarkable group deserve recognition. The extreme deadness of the figure of the Christ, for instance, the complete relaxation of the muscles where the drooping arm presses against the supporting hand of the mother, the limpness of the whole figure, so difficult to represent where the artist ordinarily has only the living and therefore the unrelaxed model to give him his suggestion. Michelangelo inaugurated the extraordinary practice of studying not only the nude model but the corpse in the dissecting room, feeling that only by this more fundamental knowledge of structure could the artist really appreciate and accurately discern the outer appearance of things. The attitudes, in turn, are marvellously expressive if we perhaps except that deeper pathos in the face which we miss only because elsewhere he, and he alone, revealed it to us.

With the completion of this remarkable group, whose mastery is equally apparent in the study of figure and life, and in the perfect knowledge of the demands of his material, Michelangelo's fame was established for all time. It has been a hardy critic who since that day has dared to challenge Michelangelo's claim to supremacy in the world of art. Certainly that supremacy was completely granted by his contemporaries. Even the lack that we perhaps feel in the statue was not felt then, for it is only the later Michelangelo that has taught the world to crave something more.

One incidental result of the completion of the Pietà was fraught with consequences so vast for the artist and his sub-

sequent career, as to completely overshadow the intrinsic importance of the work itself. It was this work which attracted to Michelangelo the attention of the newly elected pope, the great Julius II, one of the most remarkable characters of this remarkable age, and one destined to be indissolubly bound up with the artist in the memory of posterity. The relation between these two men and the works which were its result, may best be considered together in another chapter. The relation, however, had its vicissitudes and the resulting commissions suffered serious interruption. It was in one of these interruptions that Michelangelo executed the single remaining work which may be assigned to this technical period, namely, the colossal David (C 448).

The production of this statue from a mishewn and abandoned block of marble has been often narrated and need not be repeated here. The block of marble, which belonged to the city, had been the occasion of numerous previous proposals and had possibly acquired something of the character of a prize or mark of recognition. When Michelangelo, preceded by the fame of the great Pietà, returned to Florence in 1501, there was no hesitation in assigning it to him. The seemingly unfavorable character of the marble added to the fame of his great achievement. He did in fact utilize the possibilities of the stone to the full. We can perhaps best allude in this connection to a remarkable characteristic in Michelangelo's organization which profoundly affected his work. He seems to have had a remarkable power of visualization. We all have a certain power of picturing from memory or imagination, but these mental pictures ordinarily fall far short of actual vision in definiteness and permanency. They are the source of every artist's inspiration, but their suggestions are for the most part fugitive and must be held fast by rapid sketches in pencil or wax which are later elaborated, with endless compromise of other visions, to a point where they permit of permanent representation. It is

C 448, David. Academy, Florence. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

for this reason that so few works of art have the directness and spontaneity of actual experiences. They are compromises between many dim mental pictures rather than the adequate expression of a single mental vision.

Michelangelo seems to have had a definiteness and intensity of mental vision far beyond the normal and approaching to the vividness of actual vision, and this was associated with a visual memory so perfect that a picture once outlined to the mind, he could hold it fast indefinitely. The result was that to a large extent he was able to dispense with preliminary sketches and models and to project his mental vision into the stone as a sufficient guide for his chisel. As he did all the cutting of the marble himself, he not only dispensed with much preliminary labor, but was able to conceive a statue, if not more naturalistic, at least far more unified and harmonious than would otherwise have been possible. It was by virtue of this extraordinary faculty that he was able to see in this misshapen block the figure which so completely utilized its possibilities.

The statue, as is well known, represents a youth in the initial act of throwing a stone with a sling. This attitude is unusual and often misunderstood, simply because the action is unusual and little understood. Learned critics have completely misconstrued it, because they did not, like Michelangelo, watch a boy throw stones with a sling. To analyze that action and show Michelangelo's conformity to it, would be a profitless task. Hardly more important is the much mooted question whether the proportions of the body are correct. The critic may again be counseled to measure, as the artist did, instead of guessing, as the artist almost certainly did not. Michelangelo never hesitated to depart from normal proportions when he had a purpose in so doing, but he seems here to have had no such purpose, and it is doubtful if he so departed. The artist's mastery of the science of the nude is confessedly complete, but enthusiasm on the part of

the uninitiated is so closely akin to affectation that it is safer to admire in silence.

But conceding the utmost that may be claimed for the perfection of this figure, what of it? The studio will smile superiorly at such a question. Not to know that the perfect rendering of the human figure is the very substance of art! Indeed! But if the mere rendering of the figure is art, Michelangelo, at least, did not think so. Of the hundreds of figures which we have from his hand, scarce one lays emphasis upon the figure as such. Always it is something more, something done, some mood suggested by attitude or act. His figures are infinitely perfect, but they are a mere language for suggesting other and higher things. Into this series of soul revealing figures the David scarcely enters. Beyond the perfect rendering of the figure it reveals to us nothing more significant than a boy's way of throwing a stone. There are a score of nudes in the Sistine Ceiling that are infinitely greater art, because they are vehicles of great spiritual moods, and not mere studies of figure.

We are not disparaging; we are explaining. Michelangelo had returned to the most technically expert audience in the world with fame won in other parts. In Florence he had served his apprenticeship, and now, like the journeyman of the olden trades, he had returned to pass his examination as master, before this jury of his peers. The David was a test subject in the work of many artists, Donatello, Verocchio, and others. The David is his demonstration of skill. For a great revelation of prophecy or beauty this is not the place. The David is in art what the thesis for a doctor's degree is to the great literature of scholarship, merely a demonstration of skill.

The candidate passed the examination. The David in Florence, like the Pietà in Rome, established the sculptor's fame upon unshakable foundations. These two works mark the end of the first great period in Michelangelo's career.

They show the culmination of his skill, the complete mastery of the technique of his art. They do not convey to us his great message. Thenceforth it is no longer a question what this man can do; it is only a question what he will choose to do. That choice was forthwith to be revealed.

CHAPTER XVI

THE GREAT POPE, HIS TOMB AND HIS CHAPEL

THERE are few more striking figures in the history of this remarkable time than Julius II who came to the pontifical chair in 1503. It is impossible for the dispassionate student of history to regard him with approval, or to justify by a calm estimate of his character or his acts the claim to greatness which it is none the less impossible to withhold. In an age when learning was an almost universal distinction in the higher walks of ecclesiastical and private life, Julius had neither scholarship nor scholarly ambitions. A munificent patron of art, he seems to have had little discrimination, and to have recognized in the work of Michelangelo rather its titanic than its spiritual qualities. A man of action by every instinct of his being, his action was usually both ruthless and ill-considered and for the most part barren of results. His ambitions were those of an empire builder, but history will record him as neither a great conqueror nor a true statesman. None the less, there is something magnificent about this Titan who for ten years occupied the center of this world stage, dwarfing into insignificance all other figures save one, and despite all protests of judgment or sympathy, we call him the Great Pope. Perhaps he gains by contrast with other popes of the time, with the unspeakable Alexander, the indolent Leo, or the cunning and ignoble Paul. Perhaps, too, we remember chiefly the one great deed to his credit. It is to him that we owe the Sistine Ceiling.

Michelangelo probably knew the pope as a cardinal in the day when he was making the Pietà. If not, the Pietà was

their introduction. When Julius came to the papacy, Michelangelo was in Florence, putting the last touches upon the great David, setting the seal upon the sculptor's skill and waiting for the artist's inspiration. The head of Julius was full of vast projects covering every department of showy human achievement, and as soon as he got round to the subject of art, he summoned Michelangelo to Rome. An incidental result of this call was the loss to us of Michelangelo's great Battle of Pisa, designed for the Town Hall of Florence, a work which no less a judge than Benvenuto Cellini declares to have far surpassed the Sistine Ceiling. Our slight knowledge of the work, and still more, our knowledge of Cellini's ideals, leads us to a different conclusion. The work seems to have been like the David, a figure study, this time of infinite variety and unsurpassable skill, but a technical rather than a spiritual triumph. This was the thing that Cellini, himself a technician and only a technician, was able to appreciate. Much as we must regret that this cartoon, prepared at such vast labor and displaying the resources of Michelangelo's art, was never to be transferred to the wall where we could have seen it, we need not regret the call to Rome. Michelangelo listened to the one voice that could stir the deepest chords in his nature, left to the technical connoisseurship of Florence the body of his art, and took the soul of it to Rome.

Between Michelangelo and Julius there was a temperamental sympathy founded on likeness of character and common need. Both were men of terrific passion, men who knew none of the tame impulses that we call feelings, but were swayed by tempests that demand a stronger word, men of boundless energy, capable of infinite things if properly directed, but easily breaking over the barriers of personal or social control. These two men on the instant realized their kinship, and though often, almost constantly, in conflict, they were drawn irresistibly together again by their common consciousness that true sympathy and adequate appreciation were to be found

nowhere else. Never able to get along with each other, they were never able to get along without each other, a relation not uncommon in this world to spirits isolated by the greatness of their powers. It is one of the uncompensated tragedies of Michelangelo's career that the great portrait statue which he later made of Julius, to decorate the portal of San Petronio in Bologna, in commemoration of the conquest of that city and its incorporation into the Papal States, should have been an object of political detestation rather than of artistic appreciation on the part of the conquered Bolognese, with the result that on the first occasion, which came all too promptly, it was recast into a cannon to be derisively called Pope Julius. Never was a subject so born for Michelangelo's portrayal as Julius II. Never was an artist so gifted to portray a Julius as was Michelangelo. It was the irony of fate that the Titan of St. Peter's chair should have been handed down to us by the serene and placid Raphael.

To Michelangelo, the finished technician, the pope now gave instructions to prepare designs for his tomb to be erected in St. Peter's. This commission appealed to him beyond measure. It was in every way congenial to his temperament. He was at the zenith of his powers, and his imagination reached out into the illimitable. It was apparent, too, that the pope's ambition was equally unlimited, and that he desired the utmost reach of the artist's powers. The character of the pope, thus revealed in its most inspiring aspect, served to fire his imagination. Michelangelo rushed to the work, and in a short time prepared a sketch which, had it been carried out, would have dwarfed all other works of its kind since time began. It was to be a rectangular architectural structure, detached from the wall so as to be seen from all sides, a thing unknown before in tombs of the Renaissance. Some idea of its magnitude may be gathered from the fact that its decoration comprised forty-nine statues, at least twelve of them of heroic size, not to mention reliefs and other rich

decorative details. The sketch was presented to Julius and aroused his utmost enthusiasm. The commission was promptly given, and Michelangelo received *carte blanche* to quarry the necessary marble in Carrara. Soon the quays of the Tiber were covered with huge blocks of marble, in quantities which amazed spectators but added to the pope's exultation. Here was a man who could both plan and do.

Our imagination will hardly suffice to follow Michelangelo during the enthusiasm of the next few months. We shall never understand these momentous days until we realize the inadequacy of our experience to interpret the passions of such men. Artist and patron, either might have said to their wondering critics: "And all thy feelings matched with mine, are as moonlight unto sunlight and as water unto wine." Michelangelo's enthusiasms were as much more intense than those of other men as his depressions were the more terrible when the reaction came. This great undertaking was destined to bring him the uttermost extremes of both.

The work on the tomb went steadily forward, under the tireless energy of the sculptor and the sympathetic eye of the pope. His visits were frequent, even to the extent of having a special entrance to Michelangelo's premises made for the purpose. But slowly these favoring conditions changed; the visits ceased, payments were delayed, and the importunities of the embarrassed sculptor were met with coldness and at last with open repulse. Explanation was not at once forthcoming. Only later did Michelangelo learn that disease had shaken the pontiff's nerve, that superstition, following in its train, had made the thought of the tomb a specter, that vast and ill-considered projects had exhausted the papal resources, and finally that calumny and malice had marked the sculptor for its victim. Julius had plenty of reasons for his waning enthusiasm if not for his coldness and insolence. These reasons Michelangelo could not know or share, and the rebuff stung him to the quick. He fled incontinent to

Florence, outstripping the horseman sent to overtake him, and once safe on Florentine soil, refusing the summons to return. Not until the government of Florence begged him to yield to the pope's entreaties to save the Republic from war on his account, did Michelangelo consent to make his peace with the pope and return, not to the work on the tomb, but to another and less welcome task. Surely Julius had need of Michelangelo.

This interruption to the great undertaking, supposed by all to be but temporary, proved permanent. Five plans succeeded one another, each smaller than the last, and it finally ended with an incredible caricature of Michelangelo's plan, not in St. Peter's, but in a lesser and comparatively unimportant church. The structure of the tomb is beneath criticism. The forty-nine statues have dwindled to eight, of which but three have any connection with the great sculptor, and but one is directly from his hand. The other five are totally without merit, and the effigy of the pope is the very bathos of art. Even so, the great pope is not buried in his tomb, but in a scarce marked grave in St. Peter's.

We are not writing a history of either Michelangelo or the pope, and we should follow through the sorry details of this "Tragedy of the Tomb" to little purpose. We are concerned only to understand the message that he began to convey to us in this happiest moment of his career. That message was interrupted, but its spirit and purport are perfect and complete. It is contained in two works, beyond doubt the finest product of Michelangelo's genius, — the Moses and the Bound Slave, the latter now in the Louvre at Paris.

In the old church of San Pietro in Vincoli (St. Peter in Chains), appropriate reminder of Michelangelo's fettered genius, is the tomb of the great Julius. In the central niche beneath the helpless effigy and between the mildly graceful figures on either side, sits the mighty Moses (C 451). It is one of several statues of like size and scope designed by Michel-

C 451, Moses (Detail, Tomb of Pope Julius II). S. Pietro in Vincoli, Rome. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

angelo to express the characteristics of the great pope. What the others might have been we have no idea. Certainly the one we have is the one most needful, the one which expresses the characteristic that obscures all others in the history of the great pontiff. But we will not read this meaning into the statue. Let us read it out of it, for if it is there, we may.

The statue is the pitfall of the mechanical critic. Despite its tremendous power it is a violation of many of the ordinary rules of thumb. The first thing that strikes the trained studio observation is that the proportions are wrong. The head, for instance, is all too small, especially the length from front to rear. The eyes are immense and sunk in great cavernous sockets that are startlingly impressive. The nose is large, the beard extravagantly long and profuse. The bare arms are those of a giant. The draperies drawn up over the knee are in ungraceful, not to say impossible folds. Condemnation is easy to those to whom these things are the substance of art.

But why should these things be the substance of art? There is, of course, a well known law of normal proportion that has held with varying regard since the days of Polykleitos — the width of the middle finger a unit which multiplied by specified factors will give us the dimension of every feature. Attitudes and other details have likewise been formulated and the whole reduced to a canon. This once done, it requires but little practice to grind out statues to rule. But what is the result of all this? Is it not perfectly apparent that these canonical proportions, attitudes, and so forth, once formulated and accepted, art itself is reduced to a formula? The human figure thus treated becomes like a composite photograph, and all variations are eliminated by this doctrine of averages. Art becomes the apotheosis of the commonplace. Be this as it may, Michelangelo knew no such canon and it is in his deviation from the normal that as often as not we find the secret of his power.

We could hardly find a better statue to illustrate the necessities and the limitations of art. As we look at this statue we are impressed by a single thought with regard to which no observer is ever in doubt. The titanic figure, the alert posture, leaning forward as though about to spring from his seat, one foot thrown back as if ready for instant action, the head erect, the piercing gaze turned upon a definite object, the garments drawn back from the powerful limbs, everything unites in one single and definite impression. The figure is instinct with a mighty pent up energy that is ready at a moment's notice to launch into fearful assertion. This is the characteristic of Julius which Michelangelo sought through this figure to express. It is, as indicated above, the characteristic that history has largely emphasized. A man whose passions were at every moment like a bomb about to explode, with an energy, colossal though destructive, thus we know him, and thus in the guise of Moses he here appears. The fearful energies of his frame are not restrained by reflection. They are ready to be released by the touch of a hair trigger. So Julius was always, and to all who knew him.

Now how does Michelangelo succeed in giving us this impression? First of all, of course, by the power of the figure, and then, obviously, by the attitude as well, by the fact that he does not lean back in his chair restfully, but that he sits erect, fully energized, all his forces completely in hand. But all that could easily have been dulled or counteracted by a different treatment of the head. It is perfectly possible in life for a man of action to have a noble, philosophic brow. We discern his character, not by his brow, but by his action, which is patent to all men. But in sculpture we have no such resource. The man cannot act, and to choose a momentary phase of some rapidly evolving action is always weak, inadequate, and mistaken. No, in sculpture, where everything is static and dominated by a vast repose that inheres in the marble itself, we must resort to

other means. If we give our statue the philosophic brow, the lack of motion and of all real action will shift the whole emphasis, and the impression will not be that of a man of action but of a man of reflection with which we generally associate features of this kind. In sculpture we must be free to emphasize as exigencies may require. This Michelangelo has unhesitatingly done. Realist as he is, in treating details of any kind that are not essential to his purpose, he will unhesitatingly modify proportion or other factor in the interest of one paramount suggestion that he has to give. If he wishes to suggest reflection, he will exaggerate those features from which we are accustomed to take that suggestion. The brow would be higher and the face more dreamy than was the fact in life. Witness a modern sculptor's attempt in the Last Days of Napoleon in the great palace of Versailles. But if on the other hand he wishes to express action sprung from sensation, with almost nothing of intervening reflection, he will do exactly the reverse.

The features that suggest reflection must be minimized and those that supply sensation, the mainspring of action, must be made paramount. Hence the small size of the head, or rather, the upper portion of the head, in Michelangelo's statue, a device that he resorts to in other cases for precisely the same purpose. And hence, in like manner, the amazing prominence given to the organs of sense, the piercing eyes that look you through and through, the prominent nose, the heavy, passionate lips, the face that is instinct with passion, but from which almost every trace of philosophic calm has vanished. The relative exaggeration of the muscular frame contributes to the same end. He is a giant whose energies are ready for instant assertion, and from whose senses comes inevitably the impetus to that assertion.

This free playing with the figure is merely a phase of the great process of idealism which is the very soul of art. There is no point in making pictures and statues of things that are

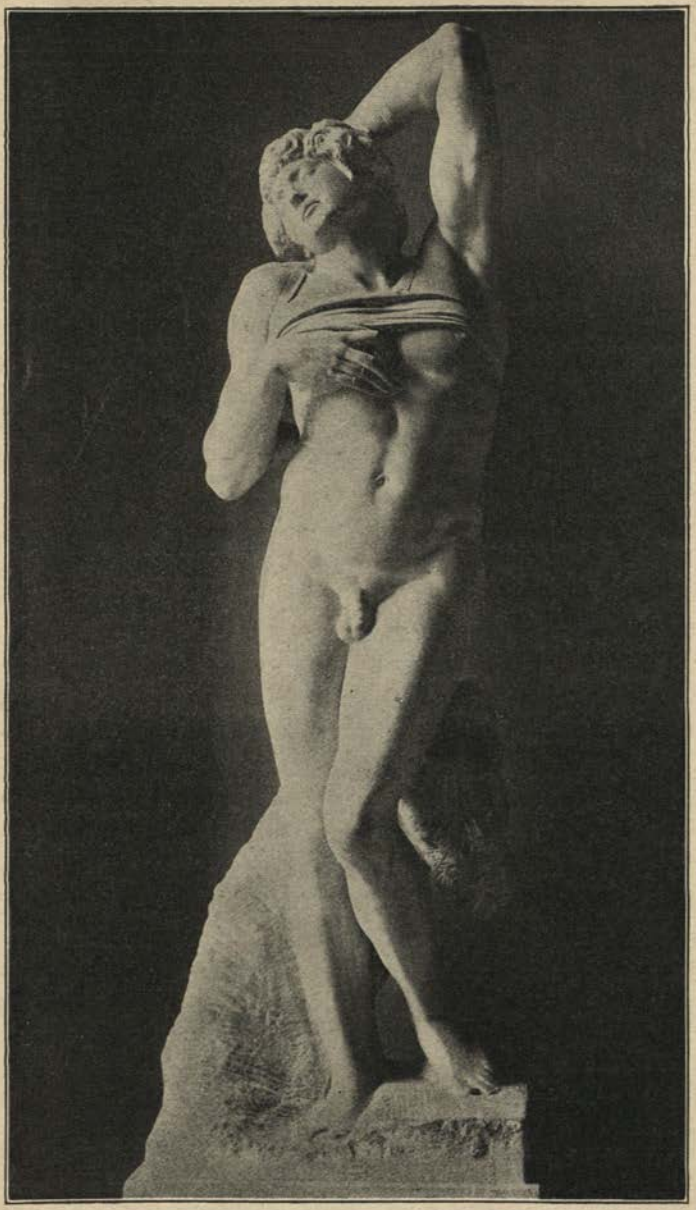
about us, just as they are about us, with no more meaning and no more inspiration. Clever copying is but a test of artisan's skill. The camera does it better than the artist at his best. No, the function of art is to give us ideas, and ideas worth the giving, ideas that life gives rarely and in broken bits, and that the artist gathers up, interprets and transfigures by his exceptional power. To accomplish this purpose, the artist is free to use any means. Nature lays no taboo upon her forms. It is as legitimate to leave out or minimize a feature as it is in painting a landscape to omit an unnecessary tree. The one question is, can the modification be made so as to convey the greater meaning and not merely to challenge attention to it as an oversight or a mutilation? This test Michelangelo was assuredly able to meet.

But our lesson learned, let us not hasten away from the spell of this great creation. To analyze is, after all, not the whole of understanding. If we are fortunate enough to go to the church when the organ is playing in the deep bay opposite, the vast harmony swelling through the mighty arches and evoking that higher sensibility, that nobler mood in which sympathy with these great creations is possible, then, first of all perhaps, something of the grandeur of Michelangelo's thought will dawn upon us. The great eyes will look out upon us until we quail before their terrible penetration; the vast passion with which the body is instinct will seem ready to launch itself forth with awe-inspiring fury. The Greeks of old pictured a god who hurled the thunderbolt and shattered the oak beneath. We wonder sometimes in what guise he appeared to their imagination. They have given us their vision in some of the fairest of their works, but two thousand years must pass and they must wait for a Christian to give us the mind and thought of the terrible Zeus. No hurler of the thunderbolt he! He has but to turn his omnipotent gaze toward the objects that he fain would smite, and the earth must melt and man must quail in their presence. There is

in all the world no statue, no work of art like the Moses. Its superhuman energy, its absolute unambiguity, the infinite daring of the artist's genius, the unwontedness of his thought, all put it in a class by itself and lift it to a place to which our minds in their highest flights but seldom attain. To the routine spirit it is a blunder, to the petty man it is a mystery, but to all it is a work of superhuman power.

Michelangelo's original design involved the use of a large number of decorative figures, seven or more of which were begun and two carried approximately to completion. Later plans first lessened the number of these figures and then eliminated them altogether. The two most nearly completed were given to a citizen of France, which country now cherishes them among the chief treasures of her incomparable collection. The others were built into an absurd grotto by degenerate Florence, from which ignominy they have but recently been rescued to honor the collection of the Accademia. It is with one of the Paris figures (C 452) that we are chiefly concerned. It is the figure of a beautiful youth, nude save for the band around the chest which holds him prisoner. The eyes are closed and the attitude expressive of conscious helplessness, and an acquiescence which is as devoid of hope as it is free from pusillanimity. To many, the suggestion is that of the passing of the spirit in death, and the name, Dying Youth, alternates with that of the Bound Slave as a popular designation. The latter is in one respect infelicitous, for of all possible suggestions, that of servility is most remote. The youth is of noblest mould, and his nobility abates not a tittle in his moment of self effacement.

Two interpretations of these figures have come down to us, either acceptable enough and of secondary importance. The one is that these "bound slaves" represent the conquered provinces which Julius, the creator of the Papal States, had constrained under his sway. If so, the artist, intent always upon the deeper experiences of the human spirit, suggests in-



C 452, The Bound Slave. Louvre, Paris.
Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

finitely better the pathos of perished liberty than the glory of conquering achievement. That these conquered provinces were to be symbolized upon the monument, according to one of its designs, is certain, and whether this figure was destined for this purpose or not, we may be certain that the spirit of the design would have been the same and would have justified our inference. More probably, however, this is one of the "dying youths" intended to represent the arts as dying with the death of their great patron. Such a purpose it perfectly serves, with its matchless beauty, its unresisting hopelessness, and its divine pathos. In all this it perfectly embodies the theme which henceforth unfailingly characterizes Michelangelo's noblest creations. That theme is pathos, expressed through more than human beauty, and perfectly but nobly submissive to a higher will.

Nothing could be more instructive than to compare this work with the David. The latter is a perfect study of the human figure, a realistic interpretation of a commonplace boyish action. It is charged with no great feeling, and suggests none, unless to those who are absorbed in problems of the craft or awed by its vast fame. *This is sculpture.* The other is not a true study of the human figure. The beauty is more than human, the detail subdued, and the attitude freely strained beyond the humanly possible, to suggest that pathos which in beauty and in depth of emotion passes all experience. *This is art.* It may be well here to recall the words of perhaps the most sympathetic of Michelangelo's interpreters, a mind which like every true seer, recognized the unapproachable supremacy of Greek art, and yet wrote in all calm of this figure: "This is the most beautiful statue that I know; and when I say this, I recall all the most beautiful works of the Greeks."

Powerful as are these two statues, they give no conception of the effect which the tomb as such would have produced. We must imagine the mighty Moses, with other similar statues,

placed in great niches which were the commanding features of the tomb. Instinct with life and power, they were to translate to our thought the character of the living pontiff. Between these niches and in front of the pilasters or buttresses which divided them, were to be these dying youths whose expiring life suffused with infinite pathos this memorial of the pontiff's death. These figures expressed in a far higher and intenser manner the idea of mourning, ordinarily expressed by bier and pall, by bowed head and shadowed face in the conventional memorials to the dead. Only slowly and imperfectly can the imagination picture the vast design on which Michelangelo had so completely set his heart that all later commissions seemed unworthy, and the Sistine Ceiling "a frivolous work."

The reconciliation between the pope and Michelangelo and the return of the latter to Rome, resulted in a new commission and a new promise on Michelangelo's part. The Sistine Ceiling was to be "repaired." The working of the commission is interesting and, in the light of subsequent events, slightly humorous. To set Michelangelo to repair the work of an earlier painter illustrates how imperfectly Pope Julius realized the task or understood the man. As a personality he knew and prized him, but of his art he understood little enough. There were few things that Julius understood less than art. It is the more surprising, therefore, that we owe to his persistent purpose the completeness and integrity of this, the world's greatest work.

The commission was most unwelcome to Michelangelo and the promise was given only after every resource of protest and evasion had failed. He urged that he was not a painter, which was true; that he wished to go on with the other work, which was more than true. He might even have added as on another occasion he did, that he disliked painting and thought it an inferior art. All to no avail; nothing would turn Julius from his purpose, and his will was

not one to belong resisted. The commission can be excused only on the general ground of the confusion of the arts in that day. Specialization was not the ideal of the time, as with us. On the contrary, it was distinctly a thing to be avoided. Many-sidedness and all around completeness was the ideal to which a few great minds surpassingly attained. Nothing better illustrates the possibilities of an ideal persistently and widely cherished than the ability of this time to produce men so many-sided as Michelangelo, Leonardo, and Raphael. Having abandoned this idea of human development we do not remotely approximate to these individual attainments. But aside from this, the age had not as yet differentiated painting and sculpture in their thought. They were different, of course, and made by a different process, but that these differences affected their themes and their inmost spirit was a fact not grasped. An artist was an artist, and might be assigned to this or that branch of art as convenience dictated. The result justified the theory in this case, but Michelangelo perceived far more than his contemporaries the falseness of the theory. He was a sculptor born if there ever was one, and interpreting painting in the terms of sculpture, as such a man must do, came to define it as essentially false or sham sculpture and thus relatively unworthy. This is, of course, a total misconception of painting. Sculpture is a study in forms. Painting, with color as its medium, is primarily a study of spaces. It is the lights and shadows that fill a space that are the great thing in any great picture, though few painters have ever realized this as did Rembrandt. To leave the space a mere void, with the merciless, untempered light of day emphasizing its emptiness, and to carefully work out forms of no matter what in this space, will never make a picture. It is only sham sculpture, as Michelangelo not unnaturally defined it. Such knowledge as we have of Michelangelo's perished work, the Battle of Pisa, perfectly illustrates this conception. As seen in the copy, doubtless much

enfeebled, of a contemporary, it is simply a mass of human figures caught in every conceivable attitude, drawn doubtless with great power but wholly sculptural in conception. There is nothing about them, no atmosphere, no light and shadow, none of that mellowing and mood-creating environment which is the very soul of painting. This Michelangelo did not know; the Italians did not know it. As we shall see, it rested with him more than with almost any other to discover it. A glance at one of his early paintings in comparison with such a painting as Andrea del Sarto's Madonna of the Harpies, is most instructive. As an artist Andrea cannot be mentioned in the same breath with Michelangelo, but as a painter he is infinitely superior, understanding the mystery of light and shadow as an environment for his subdued and suggestive studies in form.

We may carry the comparison further and still to Michelangelo's disadvantage. Let us notice his youthful work known as the Doni Madonna (C 101), more properly speaking, the Holy Family. It is a round picture, in the center of which is arranged a group of the Holy Family. These splendid figures are worthy of Michelangelo's chisel at his best. Nothing can exceed the beauty of their modelled forms, and the grouping is a masterly study in that massy compactness and stability to which we have referred. A sculptor has characterized it as a "superb composition." Yet a glance will suffice to show that as a painter's composition it is a total failure. If such a group were executed in sculpture and set up in a large hall or in the open, it would leave little to be desired. But set it in a round frame, it is at odds with everything. The artist seems to have realized this when his group was finished and to have pondered what he should use to fill in the vacant spaces, and being firmly convinced, as he was wont to say, that landscape had no place in art, and being furthermore interested at the time in the study of the nude, he has taken from his sketch book or from his brain numerous nude figures

C 101, The Doni Madonna. Uffizi, Florence.
Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

totally irrelevant to his subject, which are scattered promiscuously into an arid background. Nothing could be more inappropriate. They are not connected with the theme nor yet with the composition. They are merely convenient material for padding where there ought to have been no occasion for padding. Michelangelo had not learned that a painter must work to his frame, and that if the frame has an æsthetic character of its own, as any frame has which departs symmetrically from the simple rectangular, then it becomes so much the more exacting. The lines within the picture must harmonize with the lines that bound it, as the song must fit the accompaniment. He has painted his picture as though he were making sculpture, and then waked up too late to the fact that his round frame was there to be reckoned with. Compare the totally different arrangement of Botticelli in his Madonna of the Magnificat (B 177), or Raphael in his Madonna of the Chair (C 188), works whose charm largely inheres, however unconsciously, in the music of line, the harmony between picture and frame. No, Michelangelo does not know the essentials of a picture as regards either arrangement or subject-matter. He compromises and paints like a sculptor. That he was conscious of his limitation is much to his credit. That he imputed something of that limitation to the art which he did not understand is natural. But it was not the less a handicap as he entered upon the stupendous task of painting before him.

But we are by no means at the end of Michelangelo's limitations. He was working for the most ambitious of men, and as Julius felt his health failing and realized that his time was short, his ambition to see the work which more and more loomed large in his imagination as the personality of the artist cast its spell about him, was redoubled. The artist, working always at a furious rate, doing four days' work in one, still worked too slowly for the masterful spirit whose one thought seems to have been — should he perchance die and not see the

Sistine Ceiling? The chronicler tells us that the work was finished in twenty-two months, a work which in extent would easily be accounted ten years' work of the most industrious painter. There are critics who doubt this statement. One has even ventured, by studying the patches of plaster, assuming that each one stands for a day's work, to form his own estimate of the time required, and concludes that the work occupied some three years. Grant what credence we may to this most doubtful basis of estimate, the fact still remains that the work was rushed through with furious haste, allowing the minimum of time to the artist to study his problem and master the technique of this unwonted art. If to all this we add the fact handed down by plausible tradition that the commission to paint the Sistine Ceiling was granted to Michelangelo at the instance of his enemies, we reach the limit of imaginable handicap. If there is one thing more than another that cannot be extorted from men against their will, it is art. If there is one man that cannot be driven, it is the artist. He must choose his theme, his own time, his own mood, his own way, if the work is to be in any sense the vehicle of a higher sympathy. Yet all these conditions were lacking. Michelangelo was working for a tyrant who knew nothing about art, surrounded by an environment that was hostile and treacherous, executing a work under absolute protest. His genius has none the less surmounted all obstacles and given us the masterpiece both of his time and of his art.

It is perhaps in order to explain briefly this tradition of hostility. Michelangelo was certainly one of the least loved of men, and that too in spite of his undoubted probity and his patient kindness under discouraging conditions. Popularity, however, is seldom based on these substantial qualities. It is a matter of graciousness and tact, qualities in which the great artist was lamentably lacking. He knew nothing of those little arts by which we temper the harshness of truth in social relations. He praised when truth compelled and blamed where

truth required, a very imperfect program of social procedure. Added to this was an almost total oversight of social conventions. When Charles V visited Rome, he not only paid him the honor of visiting him in his studio, but called out as he entered, "Keep on your cap." When an astonished courtier later asked the reason for this unprecedented honor, the emperor good-humoredly replied, "Oh, he would have kept it on anyway." It was easier for emperors to overlook such slights than for lesser men. There were few whom he did not wound, and recognized genius was no guarantee against dislike.

But there were other reasons for this opposition. Bramante, one of the ablest and most unscrupulous men of his time, was in constant fear lest Michelangelo should disclose certain damaging facts that were known to him and jeopardize his position with the pope. It behooved him to get Michelangelo out of Rome if possible. To all of these reasons were added the common reason of envy of this man who enjoyed the favor of Julius, and a general desire that the pope's interest and largess might be transferred to undertakings by which others than Michelangelo might profit. What with the astuteness of Bramante as an organizer of discontent and the loveableness of Raphael who became the natural rallying point of the opposition, Michelangelo's interests were seriously menaced through a long period of years.

One more fact should be noted before we venture with Michelangelo into the great Chapel (C 104). The domes and vaults of the Italian architecture had presented difficulties to the decorator from the first. Even the mosaicists had felt these difficulties. They show obvious hesitation in inserting figures in domes and apses, whose tilted surfaces throw the figures out of their natural position. On the whole, however, they accepted the situation. But with the more realistic tendencies of the Renaissance the objection to these inclined surfaces increased. Figures represented at full length upon these leaning walls seemed leaning and about to fall. Not until the

C 104, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome.

fifteenth century was a device hit upon that seems to have met with instant welcome by the decorative painters. One Melozzo from the little town of Forli in Eastern Italy was employed to paint the great church of the Apostles in Rome, a church later unfortunately doomed to destruction. Upon the domed or vaulted ceiling of this church he represented apostles and angels in a decidedly new way. He seems to have reasoned something as follows: "Upon an upright wall I can by foreshortening make a figure seem to lean or fall backward. Why then can I not upon a wall that leans forward, by means of foreshortening, make a figure that seems to stand upright?" This he forthwith proceeded to do. The visitor to the Sistine Chapel should first thread the devious passageway into the Sacristy of St. Peter's and there dwell long and carefully upon the fragments of Melozzo's painting. There are heads of apostles and figures of angels, all curiously difficult in position and seeming to fall backward, but perfectly adapted to the purpose above mentioned.

When Melozzo's work was done, a new epoch had been ushered in. No matter how badly a wall leaned or what its irregularities, by proper application of foreshortening the figures seemed to stand upright. As we gaze upon these fragments we can easily see the significance of this discovery. We do not so easily see its limitations, but Melozzo's successors were quick to realize and illustrate them. The new opportunity offered provided a trap for the unwary. Melozzo is quickly followed by Mantegna, perhaps working out the problem for himself and coming again to the same result. In a dome at Mantua he has painted a railing round the base of the dome inside, and figures standing behind the balustrade and leaning over, looking down at you, or otherwise engaged with an ingenuousness that is almost deceptive. Correggio at Parma took up the scheme and went farther, completely forgetting the limitations of all such representations. It had now become perfectly possible to put figures anywhere on the ceil-

ing and have them stand upright, but only, of course, with this limitation, that they must be seen from below, neither the natural nor the dignified point of view. In his latest work in the Cathedral of Parma, the Virgin rises to heaven accompanied by myriads of the angelic host, and the low-vaulted dome of the Cathedral opens out with a marvellous vista of cloud and sky that seems to lead the eye up into the very heaven itself. The heavenly host soar upward, the uppermost figures mere hints in cloudy dimness, but the lower figures scarce beginning the ascent. The whole conception is a beautiful one, but Correggio hardly realized the impression which he was certain to produce. When the work was done and the patron for whom it was executed gazed at last upon its uncovered glories, he is said to have remarked unsympathetically, but with not a little justice, that to him it resembled a fricassee of frogs. The mass of dangling legs was the thing that first met his gaze, — the thing that has first met the gaze of every observer since.

The ceiling of the Sistine Chapel presented a similar problem. The Chapel is a long and narrow room surrounded by enormously high walls which are covered with a shallow barrel vault. The round arched windows are placed so high that they cut into the dropping edges of this vault and are covered by little cross vaults which intersect with the main vault in small V-shaped patterns, leaving the broad central expanse of the ceiling unbroken by any architectural feature. These curved surfaces could not, in this age, be decorated otherwise than with foreshortened figures of the kind described. Perhaps the severest test to which the painter in this case could be subjected lay in this same problem of foreshortening. It was here that Michelangelo's enemies certainly hoped for his discomfiture. As a sculptor he would not and could not know anything of these things. The sculptor does not foreshorten except in pictorial relief. He makes real forms, leaving the eye to foreshorten

as it beholds these forms from various points of view. Would this sculptor be able to deal with this problem of foreshortening met by Melozzo and carried to such extent by later painters? There was every reason to believe he would not. It was here precisely that Michelangelo's enemies reckoned without their host. We have mentioned in an earlier chapter his amazing power of visualization. Probably no other painter could have worked upon a scaffolding near the ceiling where only a fraction of the figure was visible at a time, and at the same time have posted himself in imagination down in the farther corner or at the entrance door, and carried with him a perfect mental picture of his work. Yet this was easy and inevitable for Michelangelo. The problem of foreshortening is one of the most difficult in the painter's repertory. With Michelangelo, thus endowed, it was scarcely a problem at all. The result is that the ceiling is the most remarkable series of studies in foreshortening that can be found in the work of any artist or any time. It is here that the sophisticated and technical consciousness of the age most quickly recognized his skill and proclaimed his triumph. It is here that we will recognize their judgment and pass on.

The work having been decided upon, Michelangelo made the usual preparations. He asked the Pope to have a staging built, and the Pope, with possibly unconscious humor, commanded his arch-enemy, Bramante, to construct the staging, which was done by suspending the structure from the timbers of the roof, the cables used passing through holes in the ceiling. Michelangelo protested that this made it impossible for him to complete the work, to which Bramante, perhaps not unwilling to embarrass the artist, replied that the staging could be supported in no other way. With his accustomed resourcefulness, Michelangelo dismissed the architect and reconstructed the staging, supporting it by pressure against the side walls, in accordance with the principle used ever since, but unknown until that time. He expected farther to lighten

his labors by employing helpers in painting the routine parts of the work, the architectural setting, and so forth, which involved the most ordinary proficiency. But his exacting nature, which could never coöperate or build on other men's foundations, could not coöperate even here. Their work was unsatisfactory, and after several attempts, Michelangelo tore off the plaster they had covered, laid new, and executed the work himself. So common was this use of helpers and so legitimate if confined to unimportant parts which are easily within the limit of their proficiency, that we should have assumed it as a matter of course in this case were we not definitely informed of Michelangelo's experiment and its failure. Nothing more impresses us in every phase of Michelangelo's life than his absolute isolation. Isolated by his seemingly unsocial temper, isolated by the uniqueness of his genius, isolated by the exaction of his own more perfect insight, the world looked on amazed and helpless, helpless to help or even to understand.

The first task was to choose a theme and the division of the vault. As before said, the ceiling was one vast unbroken expanse, merely notched round the edges. It was impossible to cover it with a single composition, the tendency to *tours de force* of this sort not having gone its disastrous length. The method of division again was no choice of Michelangelo but was predetermined by the practice and taste of the time. Architectural division arranged as nearly as possible to produce illusion, divided the vast plain surface into a number of deep panels which seem to be windows opening into the sky. This sumptuous architectural setting furnishes pedestals for large numbers of figures, the significance of which will appear later. Outside of this series of panels which occupies the great central space, are the notched edges of the ceiling which are reserved for later and even more significant use.

The subject chosen for the ceiling is the story of Genesis, beginning with the Creation and extending on into later inci-

dents of the Bible story. The beginning is at the forward end over the high altar, the series extending backward toward the great entrance doorway. There is much reason to believe that Michelangelo painted in the opposite direction, but too much conclusion cannot be drawn from this, for he must certainly have chosen his subjects before beginning and made his preliminary sketches or the cartoons. Only in the manner of applying the fresco itself are we at liberty to note his progress as a painter, resulting from his own rapidly accumulating experience. This progress is remarkable. If we begin at the end, that is, at the great entrance doorway, and take, for instance, the panel representing the Flood, we shall see something of the same sculpturesque manner that Michelangelo had so unsatisfactorily used in his pictures of the Holy Family and the Battle of Pisa. There are figures in throngs, executed with a mastery already long familiar, but there is little in the environment to show that Michelangelo is thinking primarily of a certain unit of space and is trying to give it a mood and a meaning all its own. If, on the other hand, we pass to the later work, the whole method changes, and finally, in the last stages of the work, the representations upon the side walls over the windows, the sculpturesque style is utterly abandoned and figures barely hinted at peer out of a mystery of shadow that is infinitely suggestive and determines the higher character of the work. These changes in method, however, significant as they are and impressive to the least technically minded, are not the subject of our study, nor will we more than note in passing the restraint with which Michelangelo has applied the principle of foreshortening above referred to. Along the sides sit the Sibyls and Prophets, those marvellous figures whose various attitudes seem to exhaust the possibilities of the study of the human figure, all in perfect erectness on the sloping walls of the low-dropping vault, sitting upon pedestals which the artist has constructed for them, the foreshortening giving the impression of absolute

erectness. But as we gaze up into the middle of the ceiling where the curve of the vault necessarily becomes well-nigh horizontal, Michelangelo makes no attempt to have figures stand or sit upright. He knows that to do so would only show us their feet and legs, and that all spiritual suggestion would be banished by this physical incongruity. So he accepts the limits which a ceiling inevitably imposes, changes the method completely, and gives us, on the one hand, these windows opened into heaven through which passes the Creator, prone, floating over the vast expanse. Or when this method does not suit his theme, he boldly paints the ceiling panel as though it were a picture upon a side wall, recking not that the figures that should stand upright are in reality lying horizontal. Better a great deal to lay that burden upon the imagination than to stand them endwise and sacrifice his theme to the sense of the grotesque. Even in the study of these things we discern the master. But were his mastery only in these things the Sistine Ceiling would not have made Michelangelo immortal.

And now, all impatient, we will turn toward the artist's message. What has he to tell us of this most hackneyed theme, for hackneyed it is, worn threadbare by age-long use, a story old and glazed with perfunctory handling until art has wearied of its monotony. In the dreary art of Ghirlandajo, splendid though his painting be, Bible tales are told perfunctorily, almost apologetically. Crowded into the background are Zacharias and the Angel and the Holy Child, while stately burghers of Florence line up in the foreground and turn their backs upon the sacred scene as though ashamed of its empty monotony. Two hundred years of repetition had rung the changes upon these themes until they were utterly distasteful. Only once in the history of human art has personal genius been able to bring back the dead to life, to again endow with interest and thrill with passion themes that have been reduced to empty phrases and to which the heart has ceased to respond.

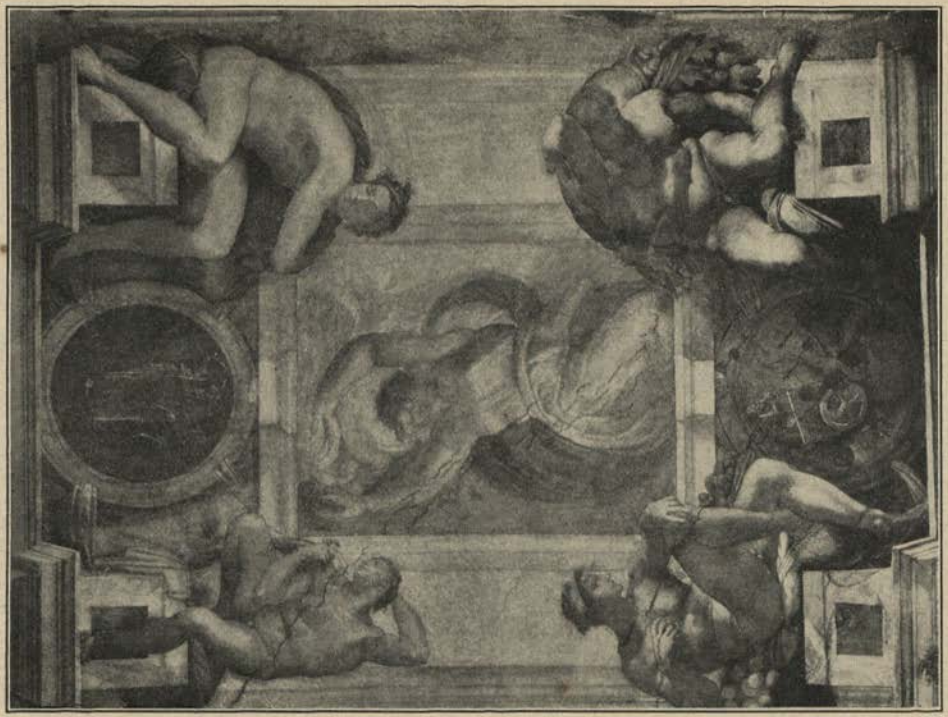
But we stumble at the outset, and need one more word by way of preparation. Michelangelo represented in the most dogmatic form the more or less conscious conviction of the Renaissance as to what was a suitable subject for art. From the time of Homer down to the nineteenth century, the supremacy of man was undoubted. The human was human, and the non-human was humanized. The Greek never raves over a landscape, though he felt its beauty in his own way. Homer never speaks of the rosy dawn. Such a phrase would be unthinkable. But the "rosy-fingered dawn," — that to him was no metaphor but only an inevitable mode of thought. So on down to our own day. Wordsworth never wanders among the hills of Grasmere but he has intimations of immortality and suggestions of the supreme Being. The principle is expressed in higher form perhaps than when "old Triton blew his wreathed horn" but it is the same principle. The impersonal has no meaning at all until the imagination makes it personal. With Tennyson all is different. Read through his poems from cover to cover, and nature speaks in her own character, impersonal yet beautiful, and the heart responds, shaped by the century's absolute devotion to natural science. To such a heart the impersonal nature needs no apology, no proxy.

Not so to Michelangelo or to any of the past. What others felt he dogmatically asserted. There was but one subject for art — the human figure. You might idealize it, transfigure it, for the human was the image of the divine, but to adopt a lesser or a lower form was the desecration of art. It was indeed the bane of painting that it attempted more than sculpture to do this degrading thing.

Consider what it means when an artist starts to paint the story of Creation and yet refuses to give us other than the human form. The Creator he may give us, for he is but the transfigured human, but for a time at least he can give us nothing else. The story of the Creation, therefore, can be

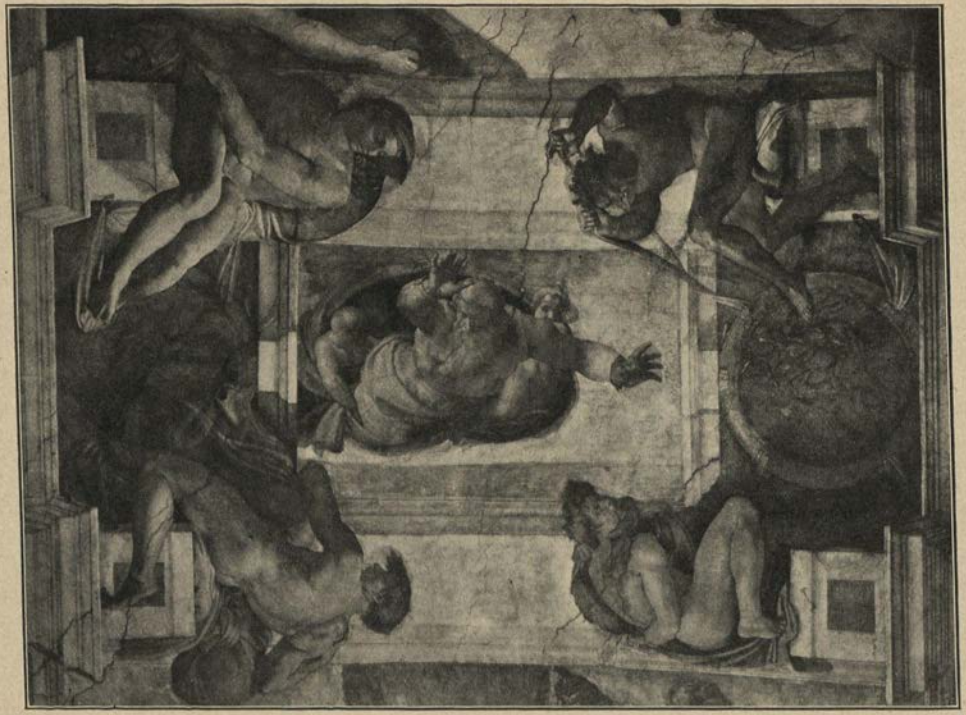
nothing other than the story of the Creator. From his varying expression and varying moods we must divine his work, the spirit, at least, of his work, for in art especially, "the letter killeth, it is the spirit that maketh alive." Hence this wonderful story has been somewhat aptly described as "the evolution of the Creator," a successive revelation of the Creator in his successive moods, each enlarging and supplementing the preceding.

(C 105) Our first panel gives us seemingly little enough. When we remember that we are to find the secret of Michelangelo's thought in the study of the Creator, it disappoints us to find that this first figure is scarcely visible. We look at once for the face, for the seat of expression, the source from which we are wont to guess the meaning of personality. But the face is concealed, apparently with intention. The void is filled with a vague mass of nebulous something into which plunges the Creator, his prone figure moving rapidly forward and his outstretched arms buffeting the masses about, but the head is upturned and we see beneath the bearded chin. We are baffled. We see nothing but mystery. But recall for a moment what the first day of Creation has to tell us. All was without form and void, and the Spirit of the Creator moved upon this void and formless mass. That is about as far as we get this first day. What is he doing? We cannot tell yet. Is his effort constructive? We cannot discern. Is it beneficent? That too is concealed in mystery. One thing only is revealed, just the one thing that that first day told us. The spirit of the Creator moved upon that which was formless and void. That Michelangelo has told us with unprecedented power. As we gaze upon this figure whose features are concealed, whose acts are indefinite, whose spirit is unrevealed, one impression dominates every other, the one impression which it was Michelangelo's purpose to make clear. It is a manifestation of power, supreme, irresistible power, whose purpose and spirit are as yet withheld.



C 105, Separation of Light and Darkness. Ceiling, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

Our panels alternate, a large and small, both to break the monotony that would otherwise result, and to accommodate the larger themes. We can sometimes vary the order to advantage. Let us take the third panel for a moment in contrast with the first which it in some ways closely resembles. Again we have the figure of the Creator, this time perfectly visible, for the face is turned toward us, not too significantly, however, for the face still refuses to be expressive; perhaps in an unsympathetic mood we might call it stolid. It is a ponderous figure, so like and yet so unlike the one we saw first. Again he moves prone and forward through the vast reaches of space, the dimmest hint beneath him of land and sea, but a hint that taxes the imagination, so slight is it. It is the Separation of the Dry Land and the Sea (C 107), or, if you will, the Creation of Earth and Water. To understand its intent we must recall the ideas of the ancients. They knew nothing of our elements, oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, and so forth. To them all things were fashioned of earth, air, fire, and water. And of these elements, two were active and two were passive. Earth is obviously a passive element, and water almost equally so, for though mobile, water is as little inclined as the earth itself to move unless moved upon. But fire is active; indeed, we know it only as such. And air, too, seemed constantly to start a-moving without outward cause, and so was deemed to have the power of moving on its own initiative. Here then we have the creation of the two passive elements. Now let us recall what we said at the outset, that Michelangelo makes no effort to show us the creative *act*. He is artist enough to know that that act has to do with science and not with art. It is the spirit or mood that dominates the act which is valuable as a theme in art. If, therefore, art is to tell us the story of creation, it must give us primarily the successive moods or emotions which accompanied the great creative acts. To tell us how it was done would appeal to our curiosity, not at all to our emotions. And so it is the spiritual



C 107, Creation of Land and Water. Ceiling, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

counterpart of the act and not its great result which Michelangelo isolates as the proper theme of art. This case is remarkably expressive. The Creator passes before us, a ponderous figure but devoid of all exertion. The great arms are stretched out but no muscle is strained. The face is turned toward us but its passive features indicate a mind at rest. The whole moves with a vast momentum like the effortless motion of the spheres. Passivity and power, the one not less evident than the other, these characterize the whole conception and admirably portray the spiritual character of the elements whose creation is here suggested.

Let us turn for a moment to the intervening picture (C 106), the larger panel in which the vaster theme is so impressively represented, the Creation of the Sun and Moon, that is, of Fire, the active element par excellence. See how instantly the whole conception changes. The Creator is here the same Creator as before, but the form suddenly become erect, with flying drapery and streaming hair, tensely knitted eyebrows, and the face gathered up into one supreme assertion of power, either arm stretched out, every muscle taut, the one merely in sympathy with the other as he flings off from his fingertip the great orb of day on its everlasting flight. It is a truism of art that these manifestations of power do not befit the static arts. Suggest power in repose, as we have it in the Moses, and you are within your sphere. Represent it in full exercise, and the petrifying of the momentary will inevitably belittle the manifestation, and you will feel the limitation rather than the illimitable. Perfectly true, and illustrated by a thousand examples. But there, for some reason inscrutable to the ordinary observer, the law is defied with impunity. He who gazes upon this figure of the Creator with the feeling that his power is limited, with the feeling even that it is momentary suggesting his weakness, with the longer gaze, has yet to make his impression known. Our artist has resources whose power we feel but cannot analyze.

C 106, Creation of Sun and Moon. Ceiling, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome.
Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

It can hardly escape our notice that these representations are less simple as we have progressed; at first only the cloud effect and the half-obscured figure unattended. Then in the panel next considered the figure of the Creator is swathed in a mighty garment within whose folds we dimly discern little attendant figures, nameless and yet most appealing to the imagination. They are invoked by the artist to perform a part which we may best understand through an analogy.

The Greek drama was in some respects like our own. The play consists of a series of acts with intervals between them. But these intervals instead of being wasted, and given over to the frivolous irrelevancies of the audience, are utilized by the playwright for the most impressive of his dramatic devices, the carefully suggested response of the audience, in the person of the chorus. The chorus is no part of the play itself, but a running commentary upon it. Here, in impassioned poetry, the playwright brings to bear all the resources of his art to give voice to the passions which the audience is supposed to feel and which he hopes to help and to guide them in feeling. The chorus bewails the fortunes of the victim and execrates the villain, arousing the feelings of the audience to the highest pitch of intensity and increasing its susceptibility to the utmost limit, as the play unveils its farther mysteries.

In the same way, these little figures that accompany the Creator upon his mission in some sense represent the spectator. Their part is at first a simple one. In the passive scene of the Creation of Earth and Water they too are passive. One gazes forward to see what is coming, the other backward in quiet curiosity to see what change is wrought as the shadow of the Creator passes. But pass to the great panel, the Creation of the Sun and Moon, and see how instantly they waken to the stirring strain of this mighty act. One shields with upraised arm her eyes against the blaze of the new luminary, while another, peering out from below, turns and gazes with wide-open eyes full of wonder and almost of terror

up into the face of the Creator, to divine, if possible, the meaning of this unprecedented mood. This psychic suggestion creates within us the mood which befits the theme. Our eyes are blinded by the luminary which Michelangelo wisely has barely suggested in his representation, and our wonder is excited and our awe borders upon fear as we gaze upon the Creator in this utmost assertion of his power.

(C 108) In the center of the ceiling is the great panel which as long as we are human will seem to us the culmination of the theme. Its story is told in Michelangelo's own free way. He seems never to have hesitated to be wise above what is written, though all unconscious, perhaps, of the audacity of his interpretations. The story runs, we recall, that the Creator fashioned man from the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. Such a story passes muster when narrated in words. Painting is a more exacting art. Other arts put no check upon the most grotesque imagination, but painting, with its more vivid appeal to the mind, quickly distinguishes the grotesque from the seemly, and the story must be revised for the painter's higher purpose. Man here is fashioned, be it from the dust of the earth; the fashioning is complete. And *such* a man, by common consent the most beautiful of all examples of the nude in Christian art. Yet the beauty is more often felt than analyzed. It is not in the perfect fashioning of body, head, or limbs. It is more in the attitude, and the attitude again not so much expressive of life and the experiences we know, as suggestive of things more elemental in art.

When we analyze art down to its simplest elements, like the oxygen and nitrogen of our planet, we shall find among the elements such things as straight lines, curves, and angles, which it will be difficult to resolve into anything simpler, and yet which have a character, a spiritual character, if you will, that is quite inseparably their own. What can seemingly be more meaningless in the world of art and in emotion than a straight

C 108, The Creation of Man. Ceiling, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Michelangelo, 1475–1561.

line? Yet it carries irresistibly certain suggestions, suggestions of stiffness, force, and burden-bearing power. If we were in a room where the ceiling was supported by a central pillar and that pillar were seen to bend and assume a curved form, we should hasten to depart. That would be suggestive of weakness, whereas the straightness and rigidity would reassure us with its suggestion of strength. The curved line, in turn, is suggestive of yielding, softness and grace, a thing equally beautiful in its proper place and trying out of its proper place. And finally, the angle is suggestive of harshness and aggressiveness. No one feels complimented by the suggestion of an angular character. These meanings are not arbitrary, though it would puzzle us perhaps to trace them to their origin.

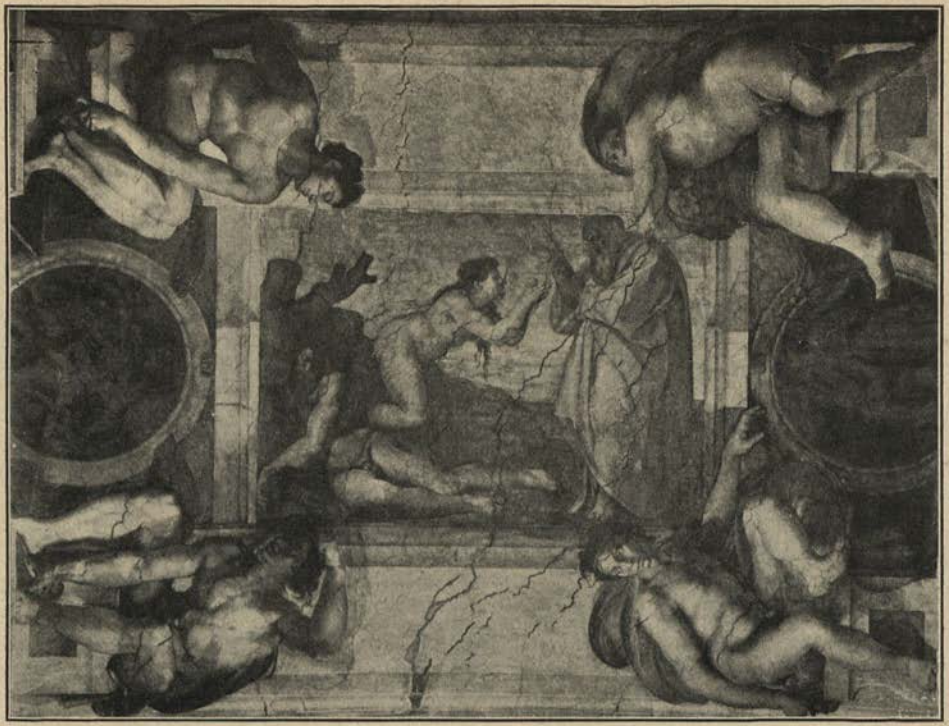
Now, Michelangelo's purpose is to interpret in harmony with these most elemental principles of art this new chapter in creation. Man is formed in all exquisiteness and beauty, but as he receives the gift of life, it is needful to suggest on the one hand his own imperfect animation, yet, withal, not the helplessness and collapse of death, still less the rigidity that our imagination perhaps reads into the Bible narrative. There must be in it all the promise of beauty and grace and yet that yielding to the divine touch and to the divine will which is indispensable to our purpose. Who would read into this story of life's beginning ever so little a suggestion of the malcontent or the *revolté?* The exquisite curves that grace this figure, even more than the perfect modeling of the figure, convey the artist's meaning. Of elemental lines and living attitudes, Michelangelo is equally master and uses them perfectly for his purpose.

More striking still is the change that has come over the Creator. Now at last we may look with expectation to the face for meaning and for a message from soul to soul. Perhaps the face at first will disappoint us. There is little of the sentiment with which a debilitated imagination has of late endowed the fatherhood of God. Things are said of the

Heavenly Father that would be a disgrace to an earthly parent, and of which Michelangelo knows nothing. The face is frank, manly, and strong, a face to inspire confidence and trust, the grandly human being, then as always the noblest suggestion of the divine. This meaning, however, has migrated to the face. The figure is less prominent, less remarkable in posture, and yet one supreme exception must be noted. Look at the hands, those two hands that meet as the current of life passes with the touch. In Michelangelo's art the hands are scarcely less expressive than the faces. Were this work to perish and leave us but these two hands, the whole story of the giving and receiving of life would still be told complete.

Interest on the part of the little attendant figures now visibly increases. They swarm in larger numbers about the Creator. Over the right shoulder and the left they crane their necks to gaze with joyous curiosity at this new creation, thus manifesting the larger interest which we inevitably feel in the creation of our kind. The sunshine is upon their faces and eagerness is betrayed in every movement. But one figure is different from the rest. This figure turns shyly away, the face as well, but the eyes gaze furtively forward with the rest, with an interest that belies the attitude. The arm of the Creator is around the neck protectingly, lovingly, as though here were an object of his especial care. Can we not almost hear the Creator say, "It is not good for man to be alone"?

From this supreme creation we pass with a sense of relief to a smaller panel which less passionately engages our attention. The Creation of Woman (C III) is one of the least felicitous of Bible stories for the painter's purpose, and Michelangelo, unable to translate it into more inspiring form, contents himself with hinting at what will not lend itself to picture. There is little of new revelation in the form of the Creator. Even the magnificent figure of Eve, that strong mature type which Michelangelo always preferred for his vaster purposes to the



C 111, The Creation of Eve. Ceiling, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome.
Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

graceful, sylph-like girlish form that other artists affect; all is excellent if not astonishing. Adam, crouching low in the corner of the field, is buried in a deep, obscuring shadow, which at once subordinates him appropriately in the field of vision and symbolizes that deep sleep which fell upon him. Even here in the third or fourth scene that our artist presents he has caught the mystery of shadow and discovered that the painter can use it as the sculptor cannot, to shift his emphasis and to symbolize spiritual realities that in marble must be expressed by other means if at all.

But interest rises again to the highest pitch as we come to the great scene of the Temptation and Expulsion from the Garden (C 112), a scene which from the decorative and color point of view is as central and focal as is the Creation of Man in the field of spiritual suggestion. This is the point to notice perhaps the most surprising thing in Michelangelo's work. Scarce any Florentine ever understood the real magic of color. Form was everything, color too often an unmanageable element with which they managed to vulgarize and spoil the forms which their pencil had perfectly expressed. Of none was this truer than of Michelangelo. It is difficult to conceive of coloring more crude, more needless and noisome than the color of the Holy Family above referred to. The colors are the worst possible, and their handling is as bad as their choice. That he should have triumphed over such difficulties at all, working against his will and under the furious pressure of the ambitious Pope, is a miracle. That he has so triumphed is perfectly obvious, but, simply because of the spiritual grandeur of his creation, this triumph is too often overlooked. A peculiar tint of mingled gray and rose dominates this masterly composition, and now that we look at it we shall find that that tint goes everywhere like rays of the sun diminishing as they go, yet everywhere the same. The ceiling has costumes and color details in infinite variety, yet everywhere goes this same tint of "diaphanous violet

C 112, Temptation and Expulsion from Eden. Ceiling, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome.
Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

grey," infinitely subtle, lofty, and pure, blending, enfolding, unifying all. It is from this center, this second focus of the mighty work that this color harmony radiates everywhere.

But to return to the story and the spirit which, with Michelangelo, is always supreme. Again our story is subjected to daring revision. In the center is a tree round which coils the serpent whose body terminates, according to the quaint imagination of Christian tradition, in a human body, head and arms. Only so could the rôle of the serpent in this transaction be explained. At the left sits Eve, like Adam in the scene before, the most splendid example of Michelangelo's treatment of the female nude. If we miss for a moment the seductive charm that French art has doubtfully lavished upon the female nude, we need but a second glance to realize that here is nobility, strength of character, which successfully shields us from the ever present danger of the theme. Base indeed would be the man upon whom Michelangelo's nude could make an impure impression.

The serpent reaches out the fruit of the forbidden tree which Eve grasps willingly, nothing loath. But here the story changes. We had read that "the woman ate of the fruit of the tree and gave to the man and he did eat." Our Milton farther shifts the responsibility. The woman was tempted while the man was away. Had her natural caretaker and protector been present, she would not have fallen. When he returns he finds that all is lost, chides her for her faithlessness, and then magnanimously takes of the fruit himself that he may share her fate. Not so our artist. Eve is tempted plainly enough, but Adam is not waiting for her to give him of the fruit. He boldly robs the tree. If there is fruit to have he is going to have it, and he asks no odds of the serpent. Thus Michelangelo, all unconscious, it may be, reads into every act the great lesson of human experience. From the least unto the greatest every form of life tells us one story. The male element is the aggressive element. It is for

him to lead and her to follow. So it has been from the beginning of time. It was a quaint and unmanly device of the early narrator to thus shift the responsibility. Of all such devices Michelangelo knows nothing. With an intuition that asks no permissions, is conscious of no discrepancies, he owes allegiance only to the great laws of life as he knows them, and he knows them as a thing perfectly revealed.

Our remaining panels are less inspiring. Here is the artist's earlier work. Here his first conceptions. The themes themselves were less to his purpose, — the Flood, with its confusion and its multiplied figures, lends itself at best far less to the artist whose power lay in putting mighty meanings into a single mighty form. The Flood, the Drunkenness of Noah, all these have merit, but a merit over-shadowed and inevitably forgotten.

We are told that the work was done in halves with an interval between. The half first completed was doubtless this long central strip, the great figures that encircle it being reserved for later execution. The interval is marked by a characteristic episode that is worth recalling. The Pope, ever impatient, had continually asked when the ceiling would be done. His curiosity was overpowering, and hints were not wanting that he would like a view of the work as it progressed. To all such suggestions Michelangelo turned a deaf ear. How could it be otherwise? His patron was no artist, and to take him up upon a staging was to give him a glimpse of a figure that would tell him nothing. It might even give rise to serious misunderstandings and interference with the work, for the Pope, it must be remembered, was autocrat, and if an arm or leg displeased him and must needs be changed, there would be no appeal from his decision. The work was so conceived that only as a whole and seen from the proper point of view could it possibly be appreciated. At last the Pope took things into his own hands. Who should go into the Sistine Chapel if not the Pope? So one day he ventured in. The artist was

painting away on the staging above, his feet hanging over the edge of a plank, when he became conscious that the Pope was stealthily watching him from below. Suddenly a plank fell from the staging near where His Holiness stood. There was a sudden dampening of his curiosity. He concluded to leave the Chapel until the artist should be done with it and choose to show him the work. Thus these two men, half Titan and half child, played their game together around this the greatest of mankind's achievements.

When at last the long series of panels was finished, the pressure upon Michelangelo became irresistible. Now, at last, he had a consistent whole, so it might be urged, and so indeed it was. The urging was renewed until at last the artist removed the staging and allowed the Pope and his following to gaze upon the great undertaking. One can imagine with what eagerness this stern old Pope, his head sinking daily lower upon his bosom, entered to see this work which was the object of so much solicitude. One can imagine too with what other eagerness these enemies of Michelangelo, led by the powerful Bramante, and now crystallized round the most lovable of all the artist's rivals, the charming Raphael, entered to see if the artist had met their malevolent expectations. They were not left long in doubt. What must have been the emotions of Julius as he gazed upon this Creator of the Sun and Moon, this Titan among the Gods who so perfectly embodied his own invincible spirit! Now for the first time Julius had found his God. The creations of other artists had been insipid, travesties upon the divine as he knew it, as he dreamed it, if indeed he dreamed at all. Here for the first time was the Creator that created *him*, who endowed him with that indomitable energy that could hurl worlds into being. Such a God he knew and recognized. Here indeed was art, to which his own heart answered back as it had never answered back before. The Pope's word was not final, but for the moment it was law. But let us charitably believe that there was

no enemy of Michelangelo so irreconcilable that he did not here recognize the creation of a master. The unanimity which has scarce been broken by the bitterest of critics since, was for the moment complete.

But hostility to Michelangelo was not finished. There was perhaps something of truth in the plea which the rival clique now made to the mighty pontiff. This work was a unit, perfect and complete. Nothing might be subtracted from it; equally, nothing might be added to it. Any addition would be an irrelevancy, out of harmony with the great central overpowering thought. What is perfection save that to which nothing can be added and that from which nothing can be taken away? Michelangelo ought not to be allowed to spoil his own creation or to create a rival to it. Leave it as it was. And now let our beloved Raphael fill these vacant and irregular spaces, where his genial compositions would fit with such infinite grace. Such was the plea, but the old pontiff, hoodwinked perhaps before, when malevolent suggestion seemed to favor his purpose, now shut his grim lips together like a vise and declared that while he sat in the Chair of St. Peter no hand but Michelangelo's should touch the Sistine Ceiling! He sat in the Chair of St. Peter just about long enough.

The massive architectural divisions between the panels in the great central vault are carried down the sides of the vault, forming large spaces between the windows for the reception of the colossal figures which have most impressed the imagination of mankind (C 117 to 128). Here sit the Prophets and Sibyls. The place of the former in a work of this kind could not be doubted. They are the great founders of the Hebrew, and so of the Christian faith. Popular convenience has distinguished between major and minor prophets. This suggests little more to the ordinary reader than prophets who wrote large books and prophets who wrote small books. The distinction to Michelangelo's mind is seemingly more funda-

mental. The minor prophets offer him an opportunity, as always, for the portrayal of magnificent figures, and to those who judge art solely by skill in such portrayal, these figures must be counted among the noblest of the ceiling. Such figures, for instance, are Zechariah (C 121), and, above all, Joel (C 120), who in dignified nobleness and magnificent freedom are equal to the best creations of our artist. But Michelangelo's work is never to be judged by the simple portrayal of the figure. That to him was a means and not an end. Zechariah, for instance, sits in profile, deeply engrossed in reading a book. Behind him stand two little figures which remind us irresistibly of the figures in the panels above, attending the Creator, and in some way associated with His character and activity. The association, which we cannot resist, is doubtless intended. They are to be thought of here as His representatives, the still small voice through which His revelation is made known to the prophet and so to mankind. But Zechariah is apparently unconscious of these figures behind him. They look over his shoulder and eagerly await an opportunity for the communication of their message. The opportunity does not come. Likewise in the case of Joel, absorbed in the reading of his manuscript. Nothing could be more dignified or beautiful in its way than this figure, but despite obvious effort to attract attention, the little figures that represent the divine Spirit gain no hearing. Joel, like Zechariah, is absorbed in reading his book. The minor prophet has always "read his book," the proper act, no doubt, for those born to be minor prophets.

In the case of Daniel (C 123), we have a distinct and somewhat striking departure from the precedent thus established. The figure is beyond question a late one in Michelangelo's work. So astonishing is the freedom which the artist manifests in handling the painter's art that critics have been wont to boldly defy tradition and declare that Michelangelo could not have painted this figure but must have had a helper more familiar

C 121, The Prophet Zechariah. Ceiling, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

C 120, The Prophet Joel. Ceiling, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

C 123, The Prophet Daniel. Ceiling, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

with this unfavored and misunderstood art. The way in which the shadow is thrown across the face — this is characteristic of the painter, not of the sculptor. The one weakness in all these criticisms is the failure to perceive that Michelangelo was striding along with seven-league boots to the very summit of the painter's art. With that power that possessed him in every stage of activity, he was accomplishing in two years that which art had been accomplishing in as many centuries. This figure is but one example among scores, of a mastery of which his earlier painting shows no trace.

But what has he told us of Daniel? He evidently remembers, as we do, one incident in the book above every other — the refusal of Daniel to live upon the king's meat and the success of his experimental dietary. Daniel is an athlete, the magnificent embodiment of physical manhood. As such Michelangelo represents him, with all sympathy. But from all we know of Michelangelo, the book of Daniel as a prophecy must have appealed to him little, this, of all the books in the sacred canon, the most enigmatical. It has been the prolific source of more fantastic forecasts of human events than all others put together. There is nothing fantastic in Michelangelo's thought. If we do not understand him it is not because he is intricate or indirect. He has the directness of a child. It is merely the vastness of his passions which baffles our imagination. For the stilted symbolism of Daniel he could have had no possible sympathy. It is quite significant that the little figure that elsewhere voices the sacred message, should here be degraded to a menial service. He comes down and holds the book in which this minor prophet is reading and from which he is apparently copying excerpts. It would be dangerous to force too far such inferences, but it is impossible to avoid the suggestion.

Turning now to the major prophets, all suddenly changes. Look at Ezekiel (C 119) as he sits, not now reading from the

C 119, The Prophet Ezekiel. Ceiling, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

manuscript which he holds mechanically and forgotten in his hand, but listening with all possible attention to the little figure that with excited mien and gesture is now pointing at something without. The prophet sits, his figure thrown forward like the Moses but in an attitude even more suggestive of impending action. One foot is drawn back as if to receive the weight of the body an instant later. The head is alert, the eyes wide open, the gaze of superhuman intensity. What is the allusion? No one who has read the book of Ezekiel can ever forget that of which the artist would here remind us, — the vision of Ezekiel. Just what he saw is not too clear, was not too clear, perhaps, to him, but as the Creator is borne through the heavens on the backs of these winged creatures, he left upon the mind of the prophet as upon all who have heard his message, the impression of majesty and of whirlwind force that has fascinated the imagination of mankind. At such a vision Ezekiel is obviously gazing, a thing pointed out by the messenger of inspiration. Forgetting all lesser revelations he now gazes, not with eye alone, but with all the energies of his frame fixed upon the fearful spectacle.

Turning to Jeremiah (C 118), note the contrast. His name has left its impress upon every Christian tongue. The Jeremiad is the prophecy of pessimism and despair. Notice how every resource is drawn upon for the expression and emphasis of this thought. He sits with his legs crossed as though permanently out of action. One hand drops idly as though unnerved forever, recalling once more Michelangelo's power of expressing character through the hand. Upon the other hand rests the heavy weight of the head. The eyes are downcast or closed. He sees not, would fain not see, for what he sees is evil, and evil continually. Inert, heavy with a sorrow that betokens utter hopelessness, this Michelangelo has expressed not through face alone but through the body eloquent, whose resources he commands as completely as

C 118, The Prophet Jeremiah. Ceiling, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

ever did the Greek. And now a master stroke. Behind him stand the figures who, as heretofore, are the messengers of the divine, but now for the first time we have not childish figures but adults. Michelangelo seems to appreciate that the sentiments here expressed are such as are impossible for a child. The child grieves but never despairs. The buoyancy of youth is incapable of these deep and permanent sentiments, for it is only permanent and temperamental sorrow that has any value in art. Hence adults are drafted into the service and these, in turn, sharply contrasted as representing the familiar extremes of strength and weakness in despair. We have all known those who, overwhelmed by misfortune, have made prompt and ignominious surrender, collapsing under the blow, not unfrequently willing to lay upon an unwilling world the burden of their grief. And then we have known others who, robbed, it may be, in a moment of all that life held dear, have gone about their daily task as before, the same cheerful greeting, the same prompt helpfulness, sorrow tearing their very heart out, but bearing it alone with themselves and with God, — the heroic type, less common, yet to none of us unknown. Michelangelo's repertory of human character cannot resist the temptation to paint this contrast in these figures that voice the message of despair. The one with drooping head and dishevelled hair weakly yields in abject surrender. The other, with head held high, a face in which despair is more absolute than any other, but after all, a spirit unbroken and undismayed. Thus our artist rings the changes upon that humanity that we know so well and which, represented in its more permanent traits, is the supreme and undying theme in art.

Isaiah (C 122) is perhaps as a figure the most splendid on the ceiling, but the theme was one that lent itself less readily to expression through painting than the others. By common consent the greatest of all the prophets, his message is not one that furnishes a dramatic incident like Ezekiel or

C 122, The Prophet Isaiah. Ceiling, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

outward despair like Jeremiah. He is spiritually subjective among the prophets and hence the one least capable of interpretation through an art that is primarily objective and sensuous. Of his inspiration, his deeper insight, none can doubt, but how shall we in painting portray a spirit turned inward upon the mental vision? Michelangelo's representation is significant. He is simply a splendid figure, sitting quietly this time, yet erect and strong, again with the written word, but all unheeded. There is nearer word at hand, and the messenger this time has a hearing. Not excited, as in the case of Ezekiel, not despairing and voiceless as with Jeremiah, but simply deeply earnest, he voices his message, and Isaiah, his eyes half closed, gazing at nothing without, sits, the very picture of intense and uttermost attention. He listens, seeing not the thing without, but seeing what Ezekiel might never see.

By common consent, and apparently by the artist's own choice, the place of honor belongs to Jonah (C 117), for the artist has placed him at the front of the Chapel above the high altar where those who enter by the door opposite, or the worshipper as he rises from prayer may most easily, most certainly see this colossal figure. Yet the figure is at first unbeautiful. It does not compare in splendid spiritual inspiration with the figure of Isaiah, as indeed why should he? The message of Jonah to the world has been a very different one from that of Isaiah, though the idle disputes to which his prophecy has given such endless provocation are hardly chargeable to his account. Why then this supreme honor, this universal praise?

There is some reason to fear that the honor accorded to this figure by Michelangelo's contemporaries was not based on the deepest understanding. The chronicler raves incontinent over this marvelous artist who, on a wall that leaned forward, could make a figure lean backward. It is indeed a marvel of technical skill. Nowhere upon the ceiling is

C 117, The Prophet Jonah. Ceiling, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

Michelangelo's skill in foreshortening more apparent than here. Every degree of foreshortening finds application to some part of this curiously postured figure, the whole being instinct with a life and a vehemence that is rare even in the magnificent creations of Michelangelo. But why does the figure lean backward? If he leans backward merely to give opportunity for these feats of foreshortening, then the whole is unworthy and is in violation of Michelangelo's most sacred canon, — the subordination of skill to the higher ends of art. Let us accept this as a purposeless display of cleverness only when we must. The whole precedent of Michelangelo's work is opposed to such a conclusion.

At the risk of trespassing beyond our field we must for a moment recall the prophecy which Michelangelo is here interpreting. The suggestions which follow are an attempt to divine the artist's views. The book is a novel, or, if the word offend, we will call it a parable, a name which is synonymous but perhaps less startling. The purpose of the writer is to rebuke the Hebrews for their race selfishness, in all time their most conspicuous weakness. The characters and incidents are doubtless pure fiction, not the less true or appropriate for their purpose. Jonah, a Hebrew prophet, is told to carry to the city of Nineveh (the writer purposely chooses the metropolis of the ancient world) a stern message of condemnation and impending destruction. He refuses to go. His concern is solely for his own people. He holds that charity begins at home, a convenient remark in such cases. But Jonah has to go; the Almighty has ways of his own for accomplishing his purpose. In this case the way chosen was peculiar but nowise unusual for the Oriental story teller. The ease with which he reaches into the crudest and most unplausible supernatural to help out the exigencies of his plot is proverbial. It did not in the least disturb the Orient reader. When Jonah, sullen under compulsion, at last makes his way to Nineveh, his message is delivered with a vengeance. The

people are startled, impressed, and the injunction to repentance is heeded in an unusual degree. And then, to the complete discomfiture of the unwilling prophet, the repentant people are spared. Jonah has absolutely no patience with this new course of events. He says in substance, "I came against my will and against my better judgment. I delivered the message as it was given to me. I told these people that for their sins they were to be destroyed, and named the day as given to me. I have staked my reputation as a prophet upon this message, and here the day has arrived, and just because these unworthy Gentiles have repented, the prophecy is not fulfilled and my reputation is sacrificed." There is something half humorous in Jonah's frank expression of grievance.

We all know how the story continues, Jonah, worn out by his peevish complaint, lies down under the shade of an arbor and falls asleep. But he awakes with the sun upon him, for a worm has cut down the gourd whose shade covered the arbor, and it has withered away, and Jonah expresses regret that the gourd has perished. Then comes the voice of the Lord, saying, "Jonah, thou hadst compassion on the gourd that was cut down by the worm, and should I not have compassion on six hundred thousand souls who knew not their right hand from their left?" Could any message be more plain? Could any message in its way be more significant? One interpreter only, seems to have disentangled this significant message from the literary accidents which have confused our alien thought, one interpreter only, and he not a commentator or an exegete, but an artist.

Look again upon Michelangelo's picture. Jonah, perched upon a high seat from which he can look down contemptuously upon this object of his disdain, leans backward and turns his coarse, unsympathetic face up in angry protest to God and says, "See, there it is, not destroyed at all! The time is up and I am compromised forever." And off to the

right, a little baby face, the youngest, gentlest of them all, turns sad little grieving eyes upon Jonah and raises a tiny, protesting hand, as who should say, "Jonah! Jonah!" In the whole range of Christian art there is no profounder or more impressive interpretation. The theme is not one of spiritual exaltation, of quiet calm, or peace, like the magnificent Isaiah. It has its unlovely aspect, but that is but incidental to the deeper spiritual suggestion which so easily exalts it to the highest rank of art.

(C 124–128). Turning to the Sibyls, our thought is at first one of wonder that they should be included here among the worthies of our Christian faith, but it was the tradition of the Christian Church that they had revealed, dimly, to be sure, but yet revealed to the peoples to whom they ministered, the coming of the Lord. They therefore find not inappropriately their place here among the prophets. But they offer to Michelangelo a different and, at first sight, a lesser opportunity. The disadvantage is turned by his colossal genius to account, and he has given them a meaning which the prophets themselves do not convey. There are no Sibylline books. It was impossible to tell by tradition or record in what respect Delphica differed from Libyca. They are but shadowy figures upon the background of a vast tradition. Left thus to his own imagination, Michelangelo at once transcends the narrow bounds of temperamental peculiarity as we find it in Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah. Emptied of their meaning he fills them with the largest meaning of all, for it is in the Sibyls that we read the great character of prophecy itself. It is not *a* prophecy, but prophecy, that expresses itself through them. Nothing is more significant than the contrasted opinions that have been expressed with regard to these remarkable creations. One writer chooses the Erythrean Sibyl (C 125) as easily first among these splendid creations, praises the rest but disparages at the close the Libyan Sibyl as one unaccountable to his mind in a work otherwise supremely great. Upon what possible ground

C 125, The Erythrean Sibyl. Ceiling, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

such judgments are based, the present writer cannot remotely guess. The spiritual significance of these various figures is so stupendous and, for the most part, so clear that it seems impossible that the most perverted studio taste can be unconscious of it. And nowhere is this message more striking than in the case of the Libyan Sibyl, a figure which the present writer would snatch more eagerly from destruction than any other upon the entire ceiling. It cannot be too strongly insisted that these works are to be regarded not merely as studies in the human figure. Their significance in this connection is indubitable, but this connection is intrinsically so insignificant, so subordinate to the higher things of art to which Michelangelo is devoted that to judge them by any such standard is like judging the more immortal passages of Shakespeare by their grammar. It is hardly less than an impertinence to obscure even for a moment these spiritual messages by considerations of technique.

(C 126) The Delphic Sibyl is perhaps the best and most favorably known, — a youthful figure and comely in the extreme, for it is a peculiarity of Michelangelo that the profoundest and even the most somber spiritual emotions are expressed through singularly beautiful forms and faces. The custom of art has here been influenced by human tradition. Mankind associates spiritual beauty with something less than the most perfect physical charm. The prophet expressed the expectancy of the race when he saw in the Messiah, with all his spiritual comeliness, a face marred above the countenances of men and "no beauty that we should desire him." Rarely has the reconciliation between spiritual perfection and physical beauty been completely effected in art. But our youthful sibyl is undeniably beautiful. Yet to dwell upon that fact or to mention it, produces an almost instant recoil. The face so totally lacks anything of the consciousness that usually accompanies physical beauty, that we deprecate attention or allusion to the fact. Other thoughts fill her mind. Another

C 126, The Delphic Sibyl. Ceiling, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

meaning is supreme in her comely face. The eyes are wide open with an expression that is tinged with pain. The mouth, too, is slightly open to accommodate the heavier breathing that speaks of excitement. There is an evident consciousness of the overwhelming responsibility which her task involves. She is a novice at the task, and this heavy, this almost crushing responsibility, so appropriately suggested by this novice among the prophets, is the first great thought that Michelangelo would convey to us as he groups around this story of God and his creations, the appropriate theme of his messengers and of their relation to God and to man. Extremes meet as we come next to the Persian Sibyl (C 124), the latest, perhaps, of them all, a figure from whom all consciousness of other things has disappeared. The face is half turned away, yet strongly, perfectly revealed, her attention completely absorbed in the book which she reads to the forgetting of all other things. Her meaning again is easy and clear. It is the absorbing nature of the great function of prophecy, the way in which it takes possession of body, soul and spirit. How little is here left for the contemplation of those nameless, petty cares that fill the warp and woof of life!

(C 127) Passing to the Cumæan Sibyl again all changes. This is the strangest, the most striking, if not the most beloved of all these titanic figures. The frame of a giantess, with bared arms that are appallingly powerful; a head small in proportion, for reasons long ago suggested; she again is absorbed in her task. But the suggestion of that terrible face is not in the least the same as that of the deeply absorbed Persica. It inspires something akin to terror. We are accustomed to the weakness and pliability of the feminine, a tradition perhaps not wholly deserved. The voice of woman somehow jars strongly in the imperative mood. But look upon this face and see if there is a suggestion of feminine yielding and persuasive sweetness. The expression of the face, supplemented, be it noticed, most admirably, by the powerful frame which

C 124, The Persian Sibyl. Ceiling, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

C 127, The Cumæan Sibyl. Ceiling, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

perfectly serves its purpose, is that of irresistible power, let us rather say of inexorable will. It reminds us that the words she will speak are the decrees of God, with whom is neither variableness nor shadow of turning, a characteristic surely appropriate to the great theme of prophecy. Profoundly significant, these vast traits that outline this greatest of functions are one by one being drawn with certain hand by our artist prophet.

(C 128) We may close this delineation with the Libyan, strangest, and, as above noted, to some most incomprehensible of all, yet how can her message be overlooked? She sits there, turning upon her seat to lift down the heavy tome whose weight, be it remarked, is no small factor in the impression that it produces. All is weighty, heavy, sombre, here, yet the face and figure are of surpassing beauty. Phidias himself would have called them classical. There is an obvious kinship here to the most beautiful types upon the ceiling elsewhere, to one in particular that we shall notice in a moment. Beauty transcendent, yet forgotten by her, forgotten by us, because from it all there is one supreme dominating expression. It is that of pathos. The message that she is commanded to transmit to man, a message to which she is wonted now, for she is not the novice that we saw at the first, that message is not merely weighty, not merely attention compelling, not merely inexorable, but, alas, it is a message of sadness. The sin of man and the disaster and suffering that it has brought into life, these are the great themes with which the messenger of God can scarce fail to be impressed above all else. They recall that significant sentence from one of George Eliot's letters, one that she wrote with no thought that we should ever read: "The religion of the future must take larger account of that which is after all of all things best known to us, the sorrow of the human lot." If any are tempted to feel that this is not the thing we know best, they are indeed fortunate. Be that as it may, one thing is certain. It is those

C 128, The Libyan Sibyl. Ceiling, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

that have felt this first and foremost and who, feeling it by the deeper predisposition of their own nature, have been most prompt with that sympathy which is sorrow's only possible alleviation, that the world has chiefly delighted to honor. Such a one was Job, such a one was Savonarola, such a one was George Eliot, such a one was Michelangelo, chief among them all.

Now as we look back over this wonderful series, each with its contribution to the spiritual interpretation of our great theme, let us stop for a moment and notice Michelangelo's method as an artist. These sibyls are women, we say. But are they? Female forms, to be sure, but are they in essence, feminine? It were dangerous here to venture upon the definition of the indefinable, the eternally feminine that lures us on, but none can be wholly unconscious of what that word suggests. First and foremost, using the word in a sense exalted and pure, it stands for charm, the instinctive weapon of those to whom is denied physical supremacy, but who have a world to conquer and ends to gain. Who has not felt that charm? Who has not marvelled at the skill with which it is displayed for the attainment of inevitable and necessary ends? Few more profound observations have been made than that of our always serious humorist, Oliver Wendell Holmes, who says in effect that the woman who has not succeeded in building about her for the radius of a few yards at least, an atmosphere of charm, has missed the point of her being. This, first and foremost, is the impression which the feminine has made upon our race, and with it, consciousness, a keen sense of the need and the opportunity for its exercise, this is foremost in the concept with which we have to deal.

And now turn to our Sibyls and see if it is there. Take not the terrible Cumæa nor the engrossed and absorbed Persica. Take those who in years and form might more appropriately manifest the qualities we have mentioned. Is the great-eyed, wondering, anxious Delphica smiling to win your favor,

frowning to make you keep your place? Does the pathos of the Libyca remind you of this feminine charm? Is she looking for worlds to conquer? We have but to ask these questions to realize what an immense gulf separates these creations of Michelangelo's imagination from the human counterpart which furnishes but the outward symbol of his thought. Lost to all feminine interests and to all feminine impulses are these mighty creatures that instead of the feminine are filled with the divine.

This is precisely Michelangelo's art. A realist, we saw, and when there is no occasion for modifying the lineaments of nature, none was more terribly, more ruthlessly true. But such is a deceptive use of the term. Absolutely, utterly an idealist, he would as unhesitatingly modify proportions and attitudes, recking not of the humanly possible, caring only to express his thought. He just as unhesitatingly empties the human of its commonplace content to fill it with those vaster impulses that alone give his work significance. The human, the natural, serves the purpose of supernatural and superhuman suggestion. That is the essence of Michelangelo and the supreme triumph of art.

It will not do to leave the Chapel, however, without noticing the other figures that crowd the ceiling where we have named alone the chief. The so-called decorative figures (C 131, 132, 133), four of which are grouped at as many corners of each of the smaller panels, filling out the space to the width of the broader panel next, are most inadequately named. They alone among the figures on the ceiling are privileged to be nameless, a privilege which the true artist would always prefer but which he must usually sacrifice for the hardness of men's hearts. A name upon a work of art is almost always misleading. Upon a work of the highest art it is usually profoundly so. It is impossible to use a name around which throng historic associations without sending our thought off on alien lines, suggesting thoughts accidentally associated

C 132, Decorative Figure, Ceiling, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

with the name in our own experience. Only by leaving art to tell its own message in its own way is it possible for the artist to crowd out irrelevancies. But, alas, his message is too unintelligible, his language too obscure to us trained in a foreign tongue, and so, despairing of giving his meaning in his own way, he gives us his meaning in another way, and mixed with other meanings which it is impossible for him to exclude. In these figures, scattered freely about upon the ceiling, Michelangelo has in some sense, therefore, his supreme opportunity. There is nothing to mislead us. What do they represent? At the risk of incurring the very danger we have deprecated, it may help us to suggest that their value, as indeed the value of all the rest, is in the expression of significant human moods. The meaning of every true work of art in the last analysis is a mood, never an intellectual proposition, never a mere historic fact. These are pure art, because they express pure mood; nothing else. It is astonishing, as we gaze upon them, to see the range of Michelangelo's genius. Emphatically, overwhelmingly prophetic in his temperament, sombre in the natural direction of his thought, he had a mood that is easily distinguished amongst the multitude that life has taught us to know. But the things that he knew not in his own self, he seems to have perfectly appreciated in his capacity as an observer of mankind. How perfectly he distinguishes between pusillanimous and heroic despair! With equal certainty he gives us the joyous, rollicking mood the Greek knew so well, that joy in physical existence untroubled by spiritual suggestion or calm.

> "How good is man's life, the mere living! How fit to employ
> All the mind and the soul and the senses forever with joy!"

Or again, take the delicate youth that sits, crowned with laurel, his dreamy eyes following his mind to things far away (C 133). The Poetic Mood perhaps we may call it, or another, less poetic, the Pensive Mood, if names help us.

C 133, Decorative Figure, Ceiling, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

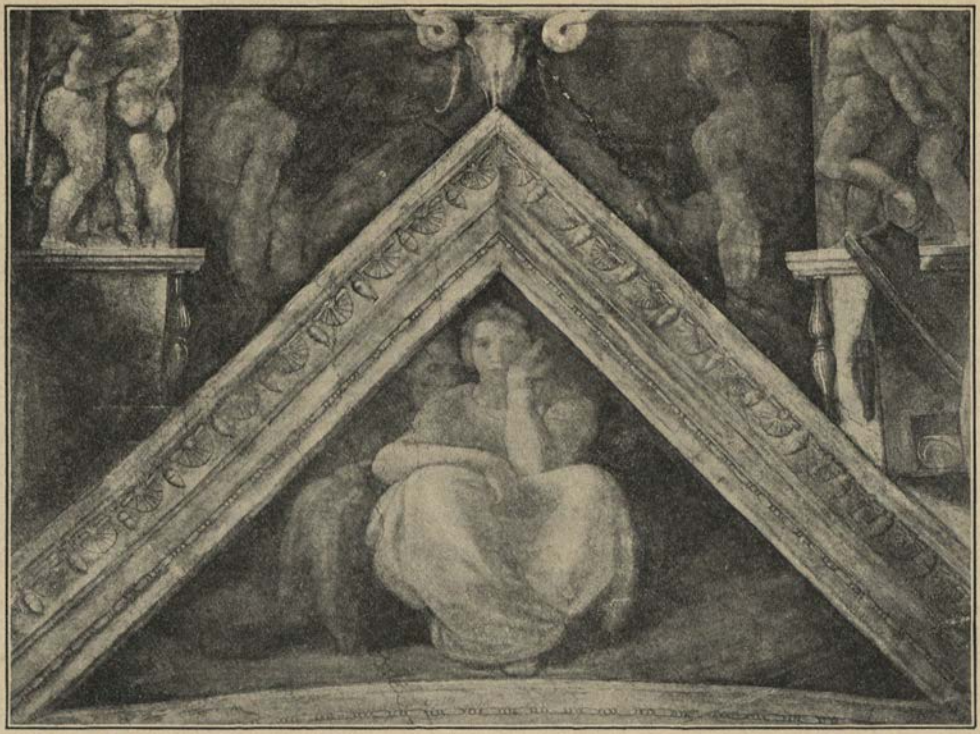
They may hinder more than help, for there are moods by the thousand where we have names but by the score. Or, finally (the list is long and cannot be too carefully followed out by the thoughtful student) (C 131), let us note the youth who leans upon a bunch of colossal acorns. The attitude is characterized by relaxation and repose of body and spirit. The face again is singularly beautiful, first cousin to the beautiful Libyca. The figure is the supreme triumph of the nude, the much prized Adam itself no whit superior. The eyes are dreamy, and again, be it carefully noted, the face on second glance is tinged with unconscious pathos, a pathos more significant because unconscious. And here we may pause to remark that it is only the pathos which is temperamental, which is so deep seated in character that it is a background upon which all other moods are cast, that is significant in art. Few things are more worthless than the April shower of grief, oftentimes vulgarly obtrusive and selfish, which deluges the victim of some temporary accident. This is one of the unsightly things to be kept at home until the eyes, red with weeping, have regained presentableness. To portray these accidents of life in art is the quintessence of bad taste. It is the sufficient condemnation of the Baroque sculpture which for a century and a half, alleging Michelangelo as its warrant, revelled in an orgy of cheap tragedy which the wholesome spirit loathes. But the pathos that tinges the imagination with a somber hue, which predisposes the individual to feel the great world's suffering, and to give it the solace of an ever-ready sympathy, as the surest alleviation of the pains of existence, is the most beautiful of all human traits. This was the beauty of Michelangelo's character. It is the all but universal beauty of his art. In this youth we have perhaps the finest expression of this most frequent of Michelangelo's themes. If names will help us here to hold a memory fast, we will take the risk. Down in the great corridors of the Vatican there is a lovely statue whose pure and placid beauty

C 131, Decorative Figure, Ceiling, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

draws us irresistibly back to the great days of Greek art. The proud possessors of this mighty collection would fain indicate that it symbolizes the spirit that broods over all. They have called it the Genius of the Vatican. As we stand beneath this vast creation of Michelangelo and see in all its variety one unbroken unity, as we see in its many hues one all-embracing dominant tint, we may perhaps remind ourselves of the thing we need most to remember if we call this beautiful youth the Genius of the Sistine Chapel.

But why the acorns upon which he leans? The question may seem trivial following such considerations, but it is suggestive. The great Julius belonged to a family named della Rovere — of the Oak. Michelangelo was nowise unconscious of the debt that he owed to Julius, both as his patron and his protector in the carrying out of this much menaced undertaking. With all his faults he realized in him a sympathy nowhere else to be found, and most necessary to him. When Raphael painted the great apartments of the Vatican, he portrayed the Pope on almost every wall; carried in his sedan chair, kneeling before the altar, the great Julius appears again and again. But in Michelangelo's assemblage of prophets and sibyls there was no place for a pope, not even for a Julius. Yet gratitude and recognition was there, and hence this figure, like others here and there, leans upon a bunch of colossal acorns, suggestive, without obtrusion, of the patron to whom he owed so much. We would like to enter the Vatican that memorable morning, following the tottering form of the stern old pope, and gaze with him upon this ineffable youth and upon this reminder of his own part in this incomparable creation. Let us hope that the stern old gray eye moistened with tears of recognition as it did not in the presence of the blazoned walls of Raphael.

One thing more, and this the last for us, as the last in time. It is impossible, as we stand in the Sistine Chapel itself, to see to advantage, or to heed in this mighty assemblage, the



C 129, Jesse. Ceiling, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

C 130, Eleazar and Mathan. West Wall, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

small curving pictures in the spaces between the windows above the side walls, nor yet the ceiling decorations in the tiny triangular spaces in the cross vaults. They were last executed, and in some sense least important, but as showing the stupendous progress of Michelangelo's technique they are in some ways best of all. They represent the ancestors of the Hebrew kings (C 129, 130), but Michelangelo has passed quite beyond anything like literalism. They are a series of suggestions from a now perfectly unfettered fancy, endowed with a supreme resource. Think of the Battle of Pisa and the sculptured outlines of the Holy Family with which our artist's career as a painter began. And now turn to these walls at which a Rembrandt would have gazed with fascination, the figures half emerging from the transparent shadow, the wondering gaze of the maiden into the mystery which is symbolized by the darkness about her, the magic of light and shadow to whose spiritual suggestion our minds are so susceptible, has seldom been more potently employed. It is this most abstract aspect of nature that is most directly spiritual in its influence upon our spirits. Of all this the sculptor knows and can know nothing. The superiority which Michelangelo claimed for that art rests upon other things, and is one which the painter can easily match by this his supreme privilege. The mystery of these shadowed hints more than anticipates the great conjurer of the north. Studied in reproduction they are perhaps the most mood-creating of all Michelangelo's creations. The unwilling artist had found perhaps the best medium for the expression of those moods which most distinguish his art.

CHAPTER XVII

ART TRANSCENDENT

MICHELANGELO seems to have finished the great Pietà at the age of twenty-eight, the David at thirty-one, and the Sistine Ceiling at thirty-seven. There still remained to him more than fifty years of life, during nearly all of which he was in such condition of body and mind that he might have continued to work at his calling. Throughout this long period, too, he was unhesitatingly recognized by all as the chief artist of Italy, the recognition falling little short of adoration on the part of those most competent to judge. When we remember farther that the period continued the policy of liberal patronage of the arts, and that his enemies and his only possible rivals were speedily removed by death, we cannot but look with amazement upon the paucity of achievement. Only twice during this half century was he employed upon a serious commission of painting or sculpture, and only once did he bring the work to completion. This is not the place to discuss the reasons for this tragic waste of the powers of the world's supreme artist. The character of the works executed or begun in this period speaks volumes as to the conditions under which the artist was compelled to work in these later days. It was one of the most troubled periods that Italy has known in her troubled career. The uncertainties of the situation were aggravated by the extreme difficulty of personal adjustment between Michelangelo and those with whom he had necessarily to deal, a difficulty amounting to impossibility in at least one pontificate which gave to the great artist but menial, not to say humiliating employment. To all of

this must be added that fact that the building of St. Peter's in Rome and of lesser buildings in Florence absorbed the energies of the time, even to the extent of diverting Michelangelo's energies from his chosen art to architecture, to our everlasting loss and regret. With Michelangelo's achievements in architecture we shall not here concern ourselves. We have still to consider one great work in painting and one or two unfinished but colossal undertakings in sculpture which precede and follow the former. It will be convenient for us to consider first the painting, the famous Last Judgment, for which we must again return to the Sistine Chapel.

(C 134) The Last Judgment, perhaps the most famous painting in the world, was completed by Michelangelo at the age of sixty-six, nearly thirty years after the completion of the Sistine Ceiling. Its message is the message of another time, and it voices, let us freely confess, a different spirit. Long years have passed, years of disappointment and tragedy. Julius had long since been gathered to his fathers, and the great tomb that was to commemorate his character was still a project, dwindling with time and with the lessening influence of his family. Another pope had sat in the Chair of St. Peter, again potent but unfriendly, disliking above all else the haunting spiritual suggestion of Michelangelo's work, so uncongenial to his pleasures and his temperament. Florence had fallen under the attack of his even less worthy successor, and the liberties that Savonarola had taught the freedom-loving Michelangelo to regard as the necessities of existence, had been extinguished forever. Odious tasks had been imposed upon the despairing artist, some of them menial and unworthy, others prostituting his talent to the commemoration of despicable and hated things. He gazes upon life now stretching behind him and upon an uncertain future, brief and ever briefer, with no hope that the ambitions of his youth are destined to fulfillment. Nor was the new occupant of the Chair of St. Peter one to redeem the faults of his

C 134, The Last Judgment. East Wall, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

predecessors or win the artist's respect. Paul III, the ambitious representative of a powerful and unscrupulous family, a fox in his low and cunning diplomacy, a hypocrite in his thinly disguised immorality, now commanded in no uncertain terms the services of the unwilling artist. The Last Judgment, covering the great end of the Chapel entirely, from floor to ceiling, one stupendous composition, so much in the spirit of the sophisticated taste of his age, is the result. It is the mockery of fate that this work has been lauded as Michelangelo's supreme achievement; that it has been studied by the artists of a later time as the model for all purposes and all temperaments. Michelangelo at his best is not the model for other purposes and other temperaments, perhaps we may say, for any other purpose or any other temperament, for he is of all artists most unique and inimitable. His manner is monstrous when used for lesser things and dictated by a different spirit. But alas, in this work, his manner, even in his own hands, is used for other things, and is dictated by another spirit. We will not waste our time or scatter our attention by repeating the unworthy jokes that are told about this immortal work, the petty prudery of the court officials that vainly whitened the place that was full of dead men's bones, — the repainting of Michelangelo's work, even in his own lifetime, in deference to these petty objections. It will suffice us briefly to notice two great characteristics of the work which we cannot ignore. First of all, the artist has shown a mastery that is worthy of all praise, in covering the vast space in a single composition which, after all, revealed itself as a unit. The titanic figures in the foreground are followed by lesser figures behind, and out of the misty background comes trooping the innumerable host up to the grand assize. One critic, sympathetic, but strangely forgetful of what had gone before, speaks of this as the supreme merit of the picture, and adds that this art of misty background and immeasurable suggestion is the art that is Michelangelo's own. Think of

it! This man, whose first pictures were but sculptured groups, padded about by irrelevant things, this man who knew no atmosphere, no shadow, no suggestion, this man has now so impressed the imagination of posterity that the extremest application of this very art is instantly recognized as his by right. It is in fact an art of which he was fully master, but the last which he mastered, the one most alien to his chosen medium.

But, conceding all that may be claimed for the marvelousness of this great composition, its unity under almost impossible difficulties, and, above all things, its limitless suggestion as the eye loses itself down the dim vista of figure and cloud, the work is in the deepest sense, the sense which Michelangelo himself would have called the deepest, a colossal, a tragic failure. The mighty nudes that stand up before us in the foreground are not like the youth that leans upon the bunch of acorns, vehicles for spiritual suggestion. Their faces are not spiritual, the moods that animate them are not exalted and grand. On the right hand and on the left there is crass materialism, that if it speaks of the mastery of the material, speaks also of forgetfulness of the spirit. These nudes are exaggerated, say some. Yes, but not more than the Cumæan Sibyl; but there there is purpose, exalted, spiritual purpose, in the hyperbole that so magnificently serves that end. But here there is no purpose. Large, gross, and carnal, they weigh heavily upon the spirit which, in the presence of Michelangelo, fain would soar. It is these needlessly exaggerated masses of unspiritual flesh that were the bane of Rubens and were responsible for his Descent from the Cross which so inconceivably shines by this worst of borrowed lustres. An orgy of flesh was the result of Michelangelo's influence, epitomized here. Such would perhaps have been the result in any case, for one can well imagine how the painters of a later time, even without this incentive, would have studied the reclining youth or the Cumæan Sibyl with attention to

body rather than to spirit. Pitiful was the device by which the "breeches-maker" artist of the day covered with commonplace draperies these figures that shocked prurient taste, but more pitiful was the fact that here for once Michelangelo failed to redeem the body by the supremacy of the spirit. Here is tragedy, not triumph; tragedy easy to excuse but impossible to disguise.

The last great tragedy of Michelangelo's life is associated with his old benefactors, the much detested Medici. When, a year after the completion of the Sistine Ceiling, Pope Julius died, Michelangelo not only lost his one great patron, but his successor, Leo X, proved thoroughly unfriendly throughout his pontificate. Leo was the second son of Lorenzo de' Medici, born in the same year as Michelangelo and therefore his companion during the two years that Michelangelo lived under his father's roof. If we may think of Michelangelo as in a sense the adopted son of Lorenzo, he was in so far the adoptive brother of Leo. Yet the eight years of his pontificate were the most humiliating of Michelangelo's experience, and we search in vain for a trace of sympathy between the two. We might be tempted to trace the origin of this antipathy to some irritation growing out of this very experience, perhaps to resentment of this son of the house at the privileges enjoyed by an outsider. Michelangelo's irritating manner in his youth would abundantly supplement any such surmise. But a deeper cause lies in the character of the pope who, inheriting both the glorious traditions of the Medicean house and the papacy as organized by Julius, was content to fritter away both on personal indulgence and frivolous dilettantism. The frivolous was not unknown among the varied interests of Lorenzo; it was clearly the dominant interest of his son. Still, he lacked neither ability nor force, and with all his indifference to the highest interests with which his house had been identified, he never forgot the material interests of his family, and while still cardinal, in the last

days of Julius, he had forced their return to Florence in a campaign the brutalities of which seem to have shocked an age accustomed to plunder and massacre. What Michelangelo's sentiments were at this fall of the government of Savonarola and the extinction of liberty so dear to him, we can infer from the events of a later time. Suffice it to say, for a decade he lived in intermittent fear of violence, and was kept in uncongenial employment by a pope who could not ignore his greatness, nor yet understand or sympathize with his spirit.

In the last year of the pope's life a new actor appears upon the scene, the Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, also a Medicean, a son of Lorenzo's brother who was assassinated, and adopted after his father's death by the great Lorenzo. He was therefore virtually another son of the famous household in which Michelangelo had been a member and like the pope his former companion and adoptive brother. His relation to Michelangelo was to be hardly more favorable than that of Leo, but it was better motived and more sympathetic. After a brief interval of twenty months, he followed Leo in the papacy, which he held for eleven years as Clement VII, the most disastrous years that Rome has known since the fall of the empire. Not only did these Medicean popes witness the dismemberment of Christendom, Leo losing Germany under Luther and Clement losing England under Henry VIII, but Rome was sacked and virtually destroyed in the struggle, with resulting loss to her accumulated art and worst of all with the most serious interruption of her art activities.

It was as cardinal that the later Clement, always primarily interested in the welfare of his house, inaugurated the great work which was to continue through his lifetime and thenceforth remain unfinished, the New Sacristy of San Lorenzo, designed as a Mausoleum for the members of his family. The work seems never to have appealed to Michelangelo, and it is certain that he took it up under compulsion and dropped it as

soon as he could. He had no idea, however, at the outset, how bitterly his feelings were to be intensified by subsequent events. The earlier sketches make it plain that the work was at the outset conceived in a different spirit from that which later came to characterize it. The reason for this change is to be found in the revolt of Florence from the Medici during the ebb of Clement's power, a revolt in which Michelangelo certainly sympathized, followed by the siege of the city by mercenaries, its stout resistance in which Michelangelo participated, its betrayal to the Medici and the formal and final establishment of the family in the person of a contemptible and vindictive bastard, as ruler of Florence. To Michelangelo this meant the extinction of Florence. History was to prove him right. From that day, Florence has never produced a great work or a great man.

It was with all the potential hatred of tyranny and meanness developed into painful consciousness that Michelangelo was driven back to his task by pope and duke. What his emotions were it is difficult for tamer natures to picture. Doubtless they varied much, and the storms of passionate irreconcilableness which loom so large in the record, alternated with moods of that loyalty to his rulers and to his art which was so deeply implanted in his nature. But the one dominant characteristic of the work is the anguish and protest of a soul unreconcilable. Slowly the work dragged on for four years more, when Pope Clement died, and the artist flinging down his chisel, left Florence never to return save under pall and bearers. They did not know that he would not return, perhaps he did not know. They waited, then reminded him, asked him, urged him, besought him. When advancing years and changing interests at last made it clear that he would not return, they begged that he would furnish designs to some one else for the completion of the work. He did not, perhaps could not. Only when all hope of his further participation had vanished, was the unfinished work supplemented

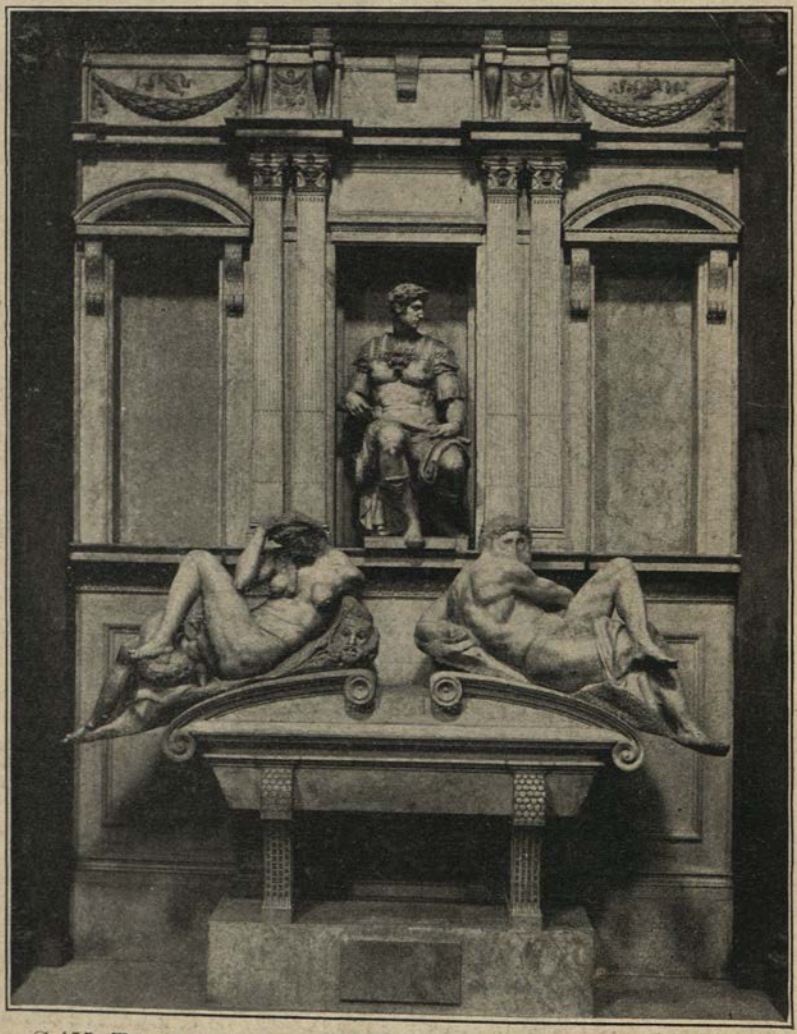
by another and given that degree of presentableness in which we now see it. The incompleteness of the work and the co-operation of another artist, apparently unguided by Michelangelo, makes it uncertain that the work as we now have it, expresses his intention. Still, it is difficult to see how these figures as Michelangelo left them, could have been used otherwise than as we now see them. Details might have been different, but not fundamentals. So far as our judgment has to deal with principles, we shall hardly do Michelangelo injustice if we judge him by the work as it stands.

These tombs have been more often and harshly criticized than anything else in the work of the great artist. Even his devoted admirers have often been unable to reconcile them with the commonly accepted canons of sculpture, even with principles which Michelangelo is known to have approved. The usual judgment is expressed by a sympathetic critic when he alludes to them as "those magnificent failures, the Medicean Tombs" (C 455, 459). Magnificent they undeniably are in their splendid manifestation of the great sculptor's power, in the repose of their cyclonic passion, the ease with which they stir the deepest emotions of the heart. But in their surprising disregard of some of the most fundamental requirements of sculpture, it is difficult, according to any ordinary standard, to characterize them otherwise than as failures. Yet from this ordinary judgment the writer most earnestly dissents, believing that the exceptional conditions under which the artist labored and his exceptional temperament required exceptional forms of expression, and yet that such expression was justified by the highest considerations of art, and these exceptional means legitimized thereby.

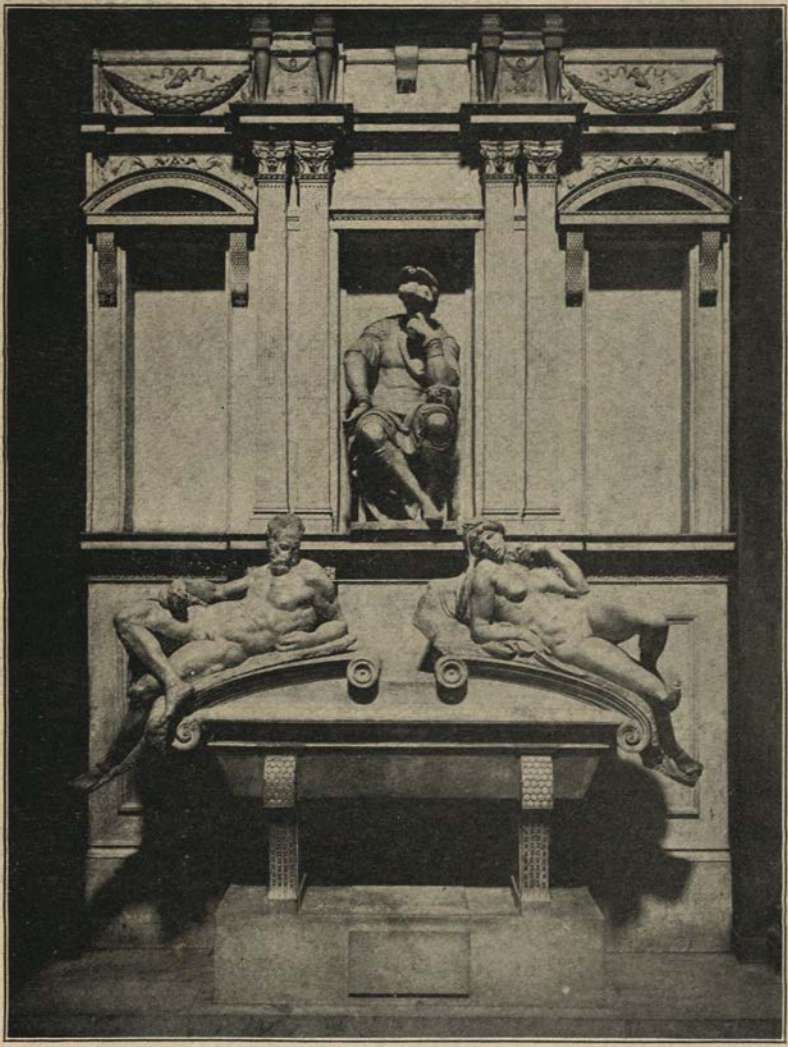
The criticisms are easy and some of them fundamental. The statues which bear the names of Lorenzo and Giuliano (not the distinguished Mediceans of those names) (C 456, 460) are said not to resemble these men, and the observer is strangely puzzled to know why. Passing this, however, as

a pardonable caprice, the critic is struck by the startling instability of the figures upon the sarcophagus, Night and Day upon that of Giuliano (C 457) and even more, the Morning and Evening Twilight upon that of Lorenzo (C 461). Of all statues known to us up to this time, none have so utterly defied the law of gravity. Held upon the sloping top of the sarcophagus at the most slippery point by bolts or other invisible means which it is impossible for art to permit the mind to contemplate, they seem plunging to their destruction and that of all about them. The following century was to give us plenty of such violations of the law of gravity, which justify themselves by Michelangelo's example, but his practice in both earlier and later work is conspicuously against such license. We have seen by what extraordinary means he sought to give stability to the great Pietà. Less conspicuous but equally careful is his effort in the case of the Moses, of which the great sculptor, Rodin, says enthusiastically: "You could roll that down hill and not break off any essential part." No artist up to Michelangelo's time had been so careful to maintain the "integrity of mass" as he. Yet here he has completely and wantonly sacrificed it.

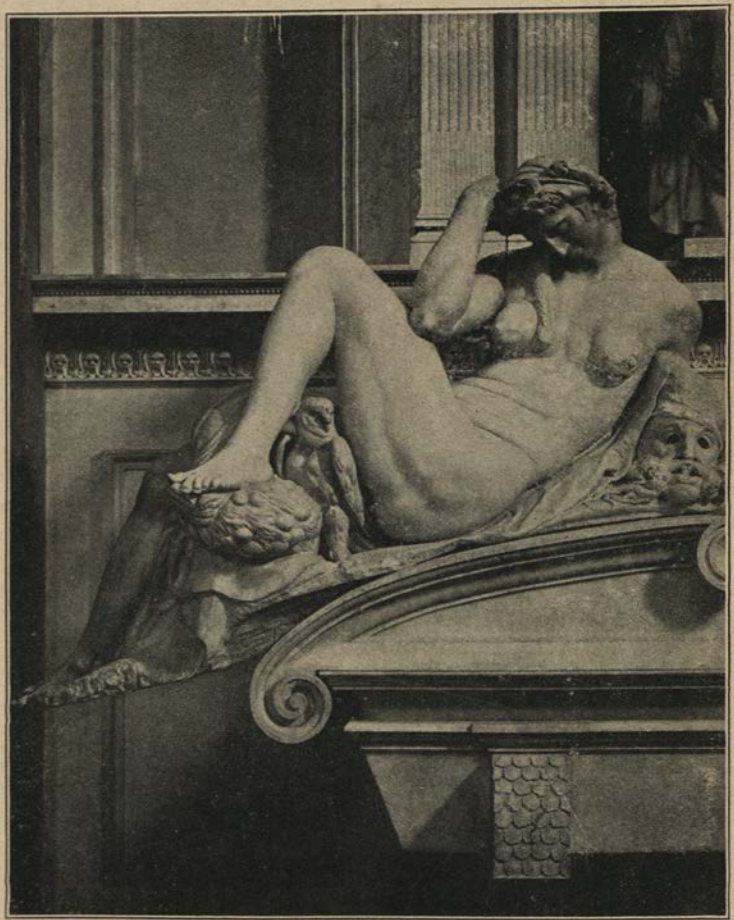
Pursuing our observation farther, we discover another violation of accepted law, at first sight easily confounded with the foregoing, but really quite distinct. It is the sacrifice of psychic repose. In considering the instability of the figure of Twilight we were thinking of it as a stone whose huge mass and weight threatens to fall with crushing force on whatever may be beneath. Let us now for a moment think of these figures as persons, and see how they seem to feel and what feelings they suggest to us in consequence. The figure of Night from the Tomb of Giuliano (C 457) will best serve the purpose of this inquiry. It purports to be a woman sleeping. But how long would a person sleep in that attitude? If she fell asleep, what would happen to the bent leg, to the unsupported elbow, to the head and neck? The slightest considera-



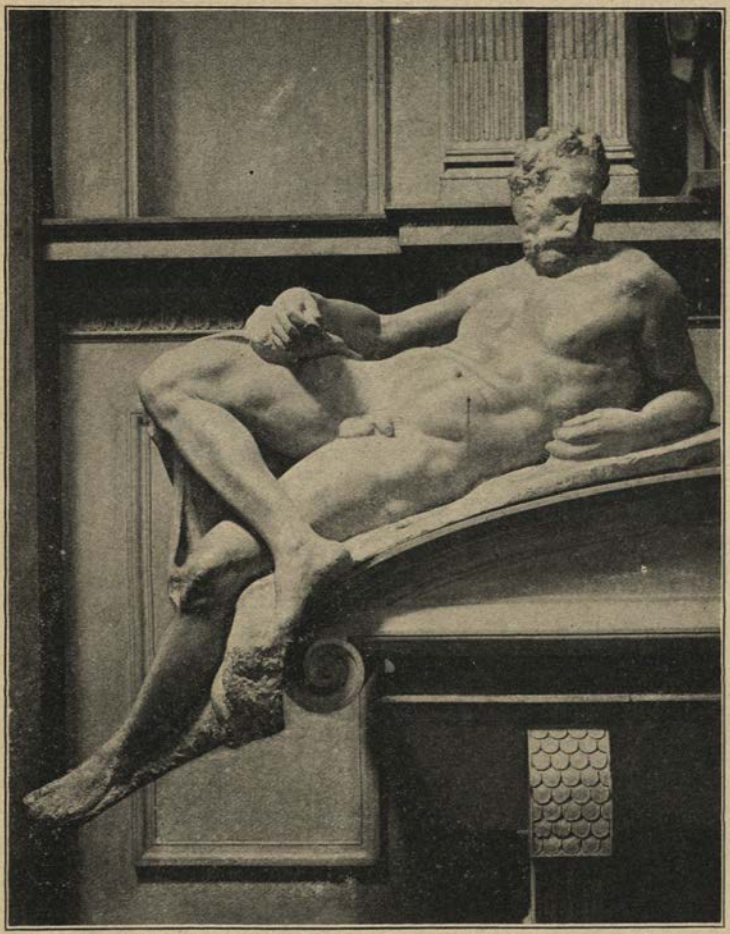
C 455, Tomb of Giuliano de' Medici. New Sacristy, S. Lorenzo, Florence. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.



C 459, Tomb of Lorenzo de' Medici. New Sacristy, S. Lorenzo, Florence. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.



C 457, Night (Detail, Tomb of Giuliano de' Medici).
New Sacristy, S. Lorenzo, Florence.
Michelangelo, 1475–1564.



C 461, Twilight (Detail, Tomb of Lorenzo de' Medici).
New Sacristy, S. Lorenzo, Florence.
Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

C 456, Giuliano de' Medici (Detail,Tomb). New Sacristy, S. Lorenzo, Florence. Michelangelo, 1475-1564.

C 460, Lorenzo de' Medici (Detail, Tomb). New Sacristy, S. Lorenzo, Florence. Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

tion will convince us that none of these postures could persist in sleep. And if by some chance a woman should sleep for half an hour in such a posture, how would she feel when she awoke? What would be the sensations of neck and elbow and wrist? The suggestion is painful in the extreme and as such is apparently a violation of the most obvious laws of art. When we consider how overwhelming are these objections, and how flagrant the contradiction between this and the artist's earlier work, we can appreciate the characterization of these works as "magnificent failures."

The unsympathetic critic may indeed go farther and remind us that overwrought or impossible posture is not unknown in Michelangelo's earlier works. The Bound Slave presents a posture which it would be difficult for the human figure to assume, and the Sistine Ceiling is not wanting in attitudes which it would be difficult for nature to duplicate, not to mention the free modification of proportions which we have more than once had occasion to note. But these attitudes are one and all marvellously expressive, and we find for the modified proportions at least the justification of an obvious purpose quite within the limits of art. But nowhere have we had postures so unnatural or so painful, and nowhere before have we had the least sacrifice of the great law of stability of stone which Michelangelo has conserved with a care as unprecedented as his violation of it seems here to be wanton.

We have already discussed the difference between correct drawing, and good or expressive drawing, and have claimed for the latter the higher place in art. There is no sacerdotal sanctity about the human figure. It is a language in the artist's hands through which he is privileged to express the ideals of art. Any departure from nature which is purposeless and any departure which obtrudes itself upon consciousness and cannot be "kept under" by the higher sentiments and ideals which it is invoked to express, is a mistake; and, con-

versely, any departure from nature which is unnoticed in the contemplation of these sentiments and ideals and which serves the better to express or emphasize them, is legitimate. The drill-master may murmur at this disparagement of the canons of the studio, and we may concede that this is dangerous doctrine; it is none the less the irreducible minimum of the liberty which art must claim.

Can we find any purpose sufficient to justify this overwhelming license on the part of Michelangelo?

We might dismiss the criticism upon the statues of Giuliano and Lorenzo, that they are not portraits, with the general observation that Michelangelo did not make portraits, but this leaves them purposeless. If not portraits, then what? Michelangelo is not wont to give us meaningless figures.

The figure of Giuliano (C 456) is singularly lacking in those deeper suggestions with which Michelangelo has made us familiar. He is passively good-natured, but not benevolent, concerned with things about him, but not alert. A mind sensuous and objective, he is concerned with neither past nor future, nor with matters of other than immediate import. Complacent acquiescence in the life of here and now, he is the negation of the larger vision and the deeper sentiments which are everything in Michelangelo's art.

Lorenzo opposite (C 460) is a complete contrast. His bowed head is covered by the helmet whose visor shades his face, and the position is such as still further to obscure the features which, even in the fullest light, are vague and haunting. The popular designation of "Il Pensiero" is a correct characterization. He ponders. There is neither protest nor pathos in the face, only mystery, the most haunting and inscrutable of any figure in art.

The artist seldom has definitely formulated purposes, such as we are continually inclined to attribute to him. He is controlled by moods which he may or may not refer to outward conditions. In these moods he sees certain mental visions

which harmonize with these moods or are at variance with them. In the one case they appeal to him, and in the other case they do not, though he may have no very definite idea why. He may, indeed, assign a nominal meaning to his works which is quite different from their real meaning as expressed in the conditions of their origin. It must therefore be with a full consciousness that we are formulating what Michelangelo did not formulate, that we venture to inquire why Michelangelo was interested in these figures as they presented themselves to his inner vision. What fact in his surroundings was responsible for the moods which these figures express? The answer at once suggests itself when we recall the recent return of the Medici, the extinction of popular liberty and the subjection of Florence to Medicean rule in a particularly odious form. We have no difficulty in imagining that for most Florentines the adjustment was prompt and painless. Their concern for present needs obscured the deeper issues which to a few seemed big with the import of the eternal things. To these few, however, the ways of Providence must indeed have seemed inscrutable. While the multitude went about their affairs pettily cheerful, too blind to see that the sun had been stricken out of the sky, how many who remembered the thunderings of the great preacher against iniquity in high places, who recalled the heart searchings of Florentines and the purification of private and public life which had so long persisted, must have cried out in their anguish of spirit: "How long, oh Lord, shall iniquity triumph? Was Savonarola then not thy prophet, and carest thou not for the righteousness that he enjoined in thy name? Lo, the kingdom of the Christ which we have sought to establish with such cost, is no more, and the iniquity against which thou settest thy hand ruleth over thy chosen." How inevitable these contrasted moods! How perfectly expressed in these two contrasted statues!

Remembering that Michelangelo was among the unrecon-

ciled and that his mood was one of far more passionate protest than that of most even of the unreconciled, we have now not far to seek the explanation of the other more pronounced peculiarities of the tombs. Suppose we had asked Michelangelo: "Why have you, who have so emphasized the law of stability in your creations of stone, left these figures to slide off into the abyss? Why have you violated the laws of nature and the laws of art?" How easily might he have replied, ever brooding upon the things he could not accept: "Do you then see stability around you? Is not everything sliding off into the abyss? I have violated the laws of Nature? Has not Florence violated the laws of God? How else should I express the perversion of law save through the perversion of law?"

The same inquiry may go farther with even more telling rejoinders. "Why this woman sleeping in such an impossible attitude? Could she sleep like that? Could she rest if she did sleep? And these other figures of morning and evening, the one pain-effaced, sinking into a sleep that promises no reviving; the other awakened as from terrifying dreams to a day that is without hope? Why this ordeal of pain and discomfort in the presence of 'Kind Nature's sweet restorer'?" How easy the answer, "Do you then sleep sweetly in this our Florence? Does sleep bring repose and restoration? Do you not take refuge in sleep from the shame of waking, and awake from dreams that are nightmares, to a day that is worse than your dreams?"

All such conversations are imaginary and, it might be argued, fanciful, but in the case of the Night we have strangely corroborative evidence. Familiar and unchallenged is the story of the admiring visitor who saw the Night in Michelangelo's absence and, struck by its beauty, penciled his compliment upon it. The lines are graceful and worthy of the polished style of the age of Lorenzo. The compliment was undoubtedly sincere.

"Night, that thou seest here sleeping in so graceful an attitude
Was carved by an Angel from this stone. And since she sleeps she is alive.
Dost thou not believe it? Touch her and she will awake and speak to thee."

Even in prosaic translation the charm of this tribute is apparent. Another artist would have felt happy all day in consequence. Michelangelo read the lines and wrote his rejoinder below. His lines have all the grace of the other's with the rugged power of the great Dante of whom he was so passionately fond:

"Well for me that I sleep while shame and wrong endure around me.
For me not to hear, not to see, is great good fortune.
Therefore wake me not, I pray. Speak softly."

Tolerably plain words these, and certain to reach the Medicean palace before nightfall, where a diviner would hardly be necessary for their interpretation.

It was in moods like these that the great sculptor proceeded with his work. It was such moods as these which these statues were fitted to express. *Ostensibly*, their grief was for the death of the insignificant personalities whom they commemorated. Really, they expressed moods born of disasters to Florence, the disappearance of righteousness and the perversion of the divine order. These moods that filled the passionate soul of the great artist, they perfectly express.

One question remains for us, and this all-important. Are such things art? They are expressive, profound, forceful, sincere, but are they beautiful? Our first impulse is to shudderingly answer, no. Such conditions do not please us; such protests are contemplated with pain. But let us be careful. Beauty is the necessary correlative of art. If we lose sight of this fundamental fact, we are a ship without a compass. But beauty is not so simple or so easily defined as we are wont to assume. Anything is beautiful which we would fain experience again for its own sake. Perhaps we may best

appreciate the scope of the term by an analogous case. George Eliot speaks of a "sort of happiness which often brings so much pain with it, that we can only tell it from pain by its being what we would choose before everything else, because our souls see it is good." And so we may say of beauty that in some of its forms it is so nearly akin to ugliness that we can scarcely tell it from ugliness, save that there is something about it that our souls crave and tell us it is good. If we are to locate these great passionate moods of Michelangelo anywhere within the realm of beauty, it must doubtless be in these forms that are out on the confines of the harsh and the terrible but which our souls crave and tell us they are good.

Do Michelangelo's moods command our sympathy or not? It matters little whether we share his estimate of the popular government of Savonarola or his detestation for the degenerate Medicean house. Knowing that he saw liberty in the one and tyranny in the other, do we like him the better that his heart refused compliance and even sought relief in angry outburst, or would we rather he had made terms with tyranny? Few will hesitate in answer to such a question. The soul that will not compromise and that refuses to be consoled for the loss of its ideals, is the thing that the heart chiefly delights to honor.

The Medicean Tombs are art. They are transcendent art, in the most literal sense of the word, for they transcend the ordinary forms of art as their ideals transcend its ordinary ideals. The laws of stability, of psychic repose, these are just laws, of application as universal as are the laws of harmony in music. But when Wagner seeks a *leitmotif* to express sin, he chooses, — not a melody or chord, but a crashing discord that in other connections would not be music at all, but which here serves as the only possible expression of a theme necessary to his larger composition. So Michelangelo reaches into the realm of dissonance for the means needful to express the vaster music which he alone was able to hear. He has not

violated but transcended the laws of art. Let us cheerfully concede that we have room in our sympathy for but little music of this heroic sort, but we are infinitely the poorer if we shut that little out.

Michelangelo's return to Rome was followed by dreary years spent upon the Last Judgment and then by a still longer task as architect of St. Peter's which occupied practically the remainder of his life. In this last connection he is said to have worked without pay, saying that he would do this work for the repose of his soul. His religious feeling deepened, and he was heard to question whether he ought not to have spent his life in devotion rather than in the frivolous practice of art. From this time, too, date the poems and letters which express such a wealth of human tenderness on the part of this man now robbed of the last vestige of human companionship. He was known as an architect, and in general, as a wonderful old man, whom all honored but few loved. It was remembered that he had painted on occasion, and though popes might come and popes might go, he had made the great chapel his forever. But to many it would have been a surprise to learn that he had once been a sculptor. The Drunken Bacchus and the Cupid still existed somewhere in private possession, but of them the world knew nothing. Away in Florence, to be sure, there was the great David, looking out upon the market-place, and the tombs were there to add their testimony, but these were unknown to Rome, awed by St. Peter's and the great Chapel. Only the Pietà and the Moses were there to be pointed out by some guide as "made by our Michelangelo, fifty years ago, before he found his real calling."

And now of a sudden the curious were again aroused by the rumor that the sound of his chisel was to be heard by night in his house. Who could have given him a commission in this abandoned art? What could the commission be? In truth, the man had returned to the art of his choice, just for one work more before he died; not for a king now or a cardi-

nal or a pope; just for himself, and for God, a work that was to be his monument. And since the great church busied him by day, the old man, almost sleepless, devoted the night to his work, which none might see. The history of art offers few more pathetic pictures than that of this old man, alone with the double isolation of old age and of genius, tireless by day and sleepless by night, a candle in his cap and the flare of the candle upon the marble and upon the dark shadows about, working away upon his last utterance to mankind. The work went slowly with this man of eighty years, for his eye was dim and his natural force abated. The hand trembled now, and the old-time grip of iron was relaxed. At last, we are told, the hand or the vision failed him, the blow went too deep and cut into the figure which he saw within the marble. And then, seized with petulance or despair — in his old age he was capable of either — he grasped his heavy mallet and began to break it up. But an old servant who had served him faithfully in these years and borne with his moods, rushed up and begged him, if he would not take farther pleasure in his work and complete it, would he not give it to him, and slowly, reluctantly, the old man consented. The slight damage was repaired, and now behind the high altar in the great Duomo of Florence it stands, as he left it on that fateful night, not marking his burial place, but none the less his monument. It should be visited near the hour of noon, before the western windows are flooded with the afternoon sun, when a slender shaft of light coming from behind and above emphasizes the suggestive shadow that wraps it about.

The group represents the Deposition from the Cross (C 464). The body of the Christ is lowered by Joseph of Arimathea and received by the mother and the Magdalen below. Never death so utter, never form so helpless as manifested in this body of the Christ. Never character so intact in despair as that of the Joseph or love so utter as that of the mother whose face shows so dimly yet so clearly through the uncut marble.

C 464, The Deposition. Cathedral, Florence.
Michelangelo, 1475–1564.

The composition is harsh like a cry of anguish, but perfect in its accord. It will be noted, too, that the old compact group returns, for with all its pain, life has again righted itself, and Michelangelo again tells us of the eternal things. There is an infinite certitude in the character note of this funeral dirge, heroism without hope and love made perfect in despair!

"Integer vitæ" — intact of life, so ran the poet's praise. Intact of life, though all else fail, so reads this last message. Last words from such a man and uttered with such deliberation should command more than the usual attention. We shall not read this last word far wrong if we formulate Michelangelo's philosophy something like this.

Life is a failure. The things you fain would do you may not do, the ambitions you cherish you shall not realize; such is the common lot of man. Who has reached the age of gray hairs and cannot look back on a pathway strewn with the wrecks of cherished plans and high ambitions? That is the common lot of life. Expect no other. Life is a failure.

But *you* need not be a failure. You cannot do the things you fain would do. One thing you can do. You can give back your soul to God as he gave it, unsullied and unscathed. Integer vitæ, — with life intact. The Joseph of Arimathea is said to resemble Michelangelo; a chance resemblance, if any, so far as outward appearances go. But in the head, bowed in submission but not in weakness, the soul strong and erect, though with nothing but itself to sustain it, we see the spiritual portrait of Michelangelo.

The story is told that while the work was in progress, curiosity ran high as to what the old sculptor might be doing in the night behind closed doors. Other means failing, two friends more daring than the rest, devised a pretext for calling upon him at night. They were admitted, not cordially but with passive courtesy, and as they gazed upon the unfinished work, the candle in Michelangelo's cap, as by accident, fell to the ground and flickered and went out, whereupon he remarked simply, "Let us go out with the candle."

CONCLUSION

"AND AFTER THAT THE DARK"

IT is appropriate that we take our leave of Michelangelo in the darkness with the candle gone out. Never did art die so utterly with the death of one man as with that of Michelangelo. Sculpture and painting, to be sure, went on briskly, but inspiration ceased. The most extraordinary achievements of technique of all preceding artists seem to have been severally considered and indubitably surpassed, all to the satisfaction of both performers and spectators, but to the inexpressible ennui of posterity who came to demand, as posterities have a way of doing, the purpose of all these displays, only to find that art had insensibly lost sight of purpose as a vital factor in its program. The artist went through the same motions and society offered the same applause for a time, it would seem, from mere momentum, because it was easier to go on than it was to stop. Unfortunately, the extraordinary means adopted by Michelangelo for extraordinary purposes were now adopted by his successors for ordinary purposes, or for no purpose at all. The worst orgy that art ever knew was to follow in that century and a half of baroque art which centers around the great and awful name of Bernini. This art takes its cue from the later art of Michelangelo. For the most extraordinary reason he had transcended the limits of legitimate sculpture. They saw his achievements, not in the greatness of the purpose which he realized, but in the *bravoure* of his trespass. It forthwith becomes the passion of art to emulate and if possible to exceed his trespass. The demand of sane art, whatever its medium or form, is: "Show me the

line of least resistance, that so I may best accomplish my purpose." The demand of the baroque artist was: "Show me the line of greatest difficulty, that so I may best demonstrate my skill." Instead of making stones heavy and stable, they sought to make them float in the air. Instead of striving for integrity of mass, they sought to honeycomb with cleverness. Painting, sculpture, architecture, all went the same evil way. Compare Bernini's David or his Pietà with that of Michelangelo, or, best of all, let the Pietà of the great sculptor make its deep impression upon you, and then walk down the great nave of St. Peter's and look at Bernini's large bronze in the Tribune, and some conception will then be possible of the abyss into which the candle of art fell when it dropped from the keeping of Michelangelo.

But why? The misguided imitation of one man, however great, cannot pervert the art of the world when it has ideals and inspiration. Why was it that when this candle flickered and went out, no other was found burning upon the altar of art? The answer is not easy, nor is any single answer adequate, but one observation at least becomes necessary as we close our study. Christian art was complete. Art is never the creation of an individual, but its subject matter is the slowly formulated experience of communities of men. Slowly these experiences take shape in more or less uniform conceptions of truth and currents of feeling. This formulation once tolerably complete, it begins to find expression in art. Its exponents struggle with problems of utterance, slowly overcome difficulties, and at last arrive at the full expression of these slowly elaborated ideals. When expression is complete, interest in the subject languishes. Farther utterance lacks originality and frantic efforts are made to increase the impression by sensational modes of expression. Witness Bernini's Pietà or Guido Reni's Ecce Homo. Art becomes theatrical and insincere. It scores a brief triumph and produces a deadlier ennui. Yet the power of expression, at this moment

of completed utterance, is at its height, and goads its possessor to ever more frantic oratory as mankind turns an increasingly deaf ear. There is but one remedy. Man must live some more and get interested in something which shall again crave utterance.

Such a period of lassitude had now arrived in the art of Italy. So long as Christian ideals were expressed superficially, by conventional symbols, art had not accomplished her task, — such is the art of Cimabue and the lesser men of later times. Not even when its great dogmas are represented spiritually, but as things unique and unrelated to our common experience do we rest content. Such is the art of Fra Angelico and of Bellini in Venice. Nor is art ever quit of her task through revolt, as in Fra Lippo, or through retrospective classicism, as in Botticelli, or stately irrelevancies as in Ghirlandajo. All these in some degree evade the issue.

The goal short of which no system, no race experience, no faith, can ever rest content is its final statement in terms of universal human experience. The Madonna will never quite satisfy us until she stands for something as broad as humanity and as old as life. Let her suffer, let her love, but as humanity suffers and loves, or rather, as humanity would fain suffer and love. She must cease to be a special case, and must express humanity's ideal. Likewise the Crucifixion, the symbol of sacrifice in the interest of soul enlargement. Make not too much of the halo, the spear or the chalice that receives his blood. These isolate the suffering whose meaning we must somehow link with our own. No matter what our personal theories, the history of art is explicit. Theology may speak of *the* sacrifice, but art will speak of sacrifice, never ceasing its quest till the great synthesis is reached.

That is precisely the meaning of these last great days of the Renaissance. The great synthesis had been reached. The Madonna comes down from her throne and her homage and walks in the beauty of the world that we love; but more than

that, she lays aside all claim to special prerogative, and we discover with infinite joy and relief that the love she bore in her heart is the same love that irradiates the life about us. The smile that the dear old monk went to heaven to find in her celestial face, we accept with glad recognition, yearning the while for a still more heavenly radiance; and when the last perfecting touch is given, the heavenly vision that we sought is but the perfect ideal of the smile that a child beholds in a mother's face. And the great tragedy of the Cross, whose mystery we had so long sought to fathom, art struggles to interpret, with ceaseless patience suiting itself to the cravings of our hearts, when lo, as symbol gives way to soul, we discover with the same relief of spirit, it is but the ministry of sorrow that is as broad as life itself. Everywhere it is the same. Dogma is broadened and deepened till it is as large as life itself. In Leonardo's Madonna of the cartoon, in Michelangelo's Deposition, there is nothing local, nothing provincial, nothing for the skeptic to doubt, nothing for the fanatic to exaggerate. The local has found the universal, and that which drew from out the boundless deep has turned again home.

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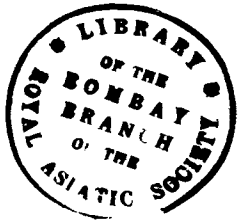

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